WHEN SHE SAYS WHAT HE SAYS: THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND BRAGGING ON EVALUATIONS OF COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1994

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the undeserved gift of grace received through numinous sources of encouragement and support, this project would never have been completed. Some among them merit special mention. Many thanks go to the friends I made during the course of this work. Drew McGukin, Rick Flug, Gary Koch, Randy Dillon, and Vivian Sheer have provided untold hours of listening, patience, and encouragement. Their steadfastness became a constant reminder of the important things in life.

Thanks also go to my friends back home, who never forgot me during my sojourn in the land of gators. Without their many displays of kindness and remembrance I would have abandoned the journey.

I especially acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Rebecca Cline, my committee chair, who was always accessible, challenging, and never gave up on me. She encouraged me when my confidence was low and allowed me to both learn with and from her. Dr. Cline was ever pushing me to do better, look deeper, and be more focused. At the same time, she was always sensitive to the exhaustion and stress of graduate study. I will always be grateful for her unwavering support during my graduate work.

I also wish to thank my other committee members for their assistance with this project. Dr. Anthony Clark never failed to find time to help me with my work and frequently managed to interject a degree of levity into a situation where perspective often was difficult to maintain. Dr. Rebecca Ford introduced me to a number of topics and outstanding scholarly sources that added to my understanding of gender and that I might never have discovered otherwise. Dr. Leonard Tipton always had useful questions (i.e., questions that helped me learn something) and the foresight to know I could one day use a file of "tables from published articles." Dr. Donald Williams provided excellent editorial review and never failed to acknowledge and compliment my efforts.

Most of all, I acknowledge Farish and Irma McKenzie who, through example, have taught me many worthwhile things about being a decent human being. For example, don't give up, finish what you start, always do your best, and live the "great" and "second" commandments. I find great comfort in knowing that neither they nor God will ever desert me. My parents continue to be the most impressive people I have ever known.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 1994

Chair: Rebecca J. Cline
Major Department: Communication Processes and Disorders

This investigation reports analyses of the influence of gender and bragging on evaluations of communication competence, effectiveness and appropriateness, and probability of a recommendation to hire. Three employment interview scenarios, with verbatim transcripts, representing "High" (HLB), "Moderate" (MLB) or "Low" (LLB) levels of bragging, and each attributed to either a male or female job applicant, were used as the treatment stimuli. Each subject, assuming the role of interviewer, read one scenario. Subjects then evaluated the job applicant by responding to a communication competence scale adapted for this study. Subjects also indicated the probability of a recommendation to hire. Factor analysis revealed four independent factors in the communication competence scale.

They were labeled Conversational Appropriateness (CA), Relational Appropriateness (RA), Conversational Effectiveness (CE), and Conversational Ineffectiveness (CI). Evaluations of male and female job applicants' overall communication competence, CA, RA, CE, and CI, did not differ by sex of applicant or sex of respondent. Evaluations did differ by level of bragging. HLB consistently resulted in statistically significant lower evaluations of communication competence, CA, RA, CE, and CI than did LLB or MLB for male and female job applicants. The differences between means for evaluations of overall communication competence, CA, and RA were statistically significant at all three levels of bragging. The differences between means for evaluations of CE and CI were statistically significant for MLB and HLB only. HLB also resulted in a statistically significant lower probability of a recommendation to hire than did LLB or MLB. Males were more likely to recommend hiring than were females. Results of this study suggest that evaluations of communication competence in one task-related context (employment interview) are more strongly influenced by the propriety of a specific communication behavior than by gender.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

When little is known about an interaction partner, communicators tend to look for clues from the partner that suggest not only how they themselves should communicate, but what to expect from the other communicator as well. Sex of partner is a particularly informative clue in such circumstances. The sex of the interactants often provides the basis for evaluations of communication behavior. This is particularly true of initial interactions.

Based on cultural presumptions of differences between the sexes, individuals hold different beliefs about the expected behaviors of men and women. For example, men are expected to be adventurous, competitive, dominant, and decisive, whereas women are expected to be compassionate, submissive, and emotional (Rosen & Jerdee, 1976). Many presumed "differences between the sexes" are based on stereotypes of male and female behavior that tend to guide individuals in their performance, expectations, and evaluations of behavior (Spence, Deaux, & Helmreich, 1985; West & Zimmerman 1987). As a result, individuals often evaluate men and women performing the same behavior in different ways.

Gender Differences

The terms "sex" and "gender" can be confusing, in that they are sometimes used interchangeably. However, scholars make a distinction between the two terms. "Sex" is biologically determined. From birth, most persons are clearly male or female. In contrast to sex, "gender" is a product of one's culture and is influenced by one's socialization into that culture (Eakins & Eakins, 1978; Rakow, 1986). Cultures establish norms of appearance and behavior which are labeled "masculine" or "feminine" (Bem, 1981), and as individuals adopt these normative behaviors they learn how to be and become categorized as a boy or girl or man or woman.

Scholars agree that socialized gender differences exist in terms of both expected and actual behaviors for men and women. (For reviews see Aries, 1987; Deaux, 1985; Eagly, 1987; Hall, 1984.) For example, men are perceived to be more instrumental (task-oriented) in their communication than are women and women are perceived to be more expressive (other-oriented) in their communication than men (Eagly, 1987; Spence et al., 1985). Consequently, most members of society recognize and anticipate substantial differences in behavior based on the gender of the communicator. That is, both men and women expect men and women to behave differently. The result is differing evaluations by both men and women of men's and women's identical or similar

performances. The power of these anticipated differences to influence the evaluation of behaviors is manifested in gender stereotypes.

Stereotypes are broadly held overgeneralizations about some group (Basow, 1986). According to Eagly (1987), "people act to confirm the stereotypic expectations that other people hold about their behavior" (p. 15) and expectancy-confirming behaviors are particularly likely when they are broadly shared in a society. Thus, one's gender creates self-fulfilling prophecies relative to behavior. According to Eagly, not only do women and men perceive each other behaving differently, they also believe that women and men ought to behave differently. Among those expected behavioral differences are communication behaviors.

Within western culture, which forms the cultural basis for this work, communicative behaviors considered culturally appropriate for men are not necessarily considered culturally appropriate for women and vice versa. As individuals interact, their evaluations of themselves and others may be influenced more strongly by expectations of what men and women should do than by what men and women actually do. For example, men and women who brag equally often in terms of their actual behavior will be evaluated differently if bragging is considered acceptable as a masculine behavior, but unacceptable as a feminine behavior.

As a result, women who brag may be evaluated less favorably than men who brag.

Despite the increased visibility of the importance of "gender differences" in evaluations of communication behavior (Spitzack & Carter, 1987), many contexts in which communication may be influenced by expectations of gender specific communication behaviors have yet to be examined. In particular, there is a paucity of research regarding the influence of gender on evaluations of communication competence in task-related interactions.

Task-related interactions are an important context for evaluations of communication competence, because of the potential impact a positive or negative evaluation can have on one's occupational success (Spitzberg & Brunner, 1989). As the number of instances in which men and women are vying for the same job or promotion increases, the influence of gender on evaluations of communication competence becomes an issue of practical import.

Communication Competence

"Communication competence" refers, in general, to communication ability. Communication competence is comprised of communicative "effectiveness" and "appropriateness" (Bochner & Kelly, 1974; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Wiemann, 1977). "Effectiveness" is the degree to which communicators accomplish their goals in a communicative interaction (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989).

"Appropriateness" is the degree to which interaction goals are achieved in a socially acceptable manner (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). Numerous scholars conclude that appropriateness and effectiveness are fundamental properties of communication competence and that both must be considered in any study of communication competence (e.g., Bochner & Kelly, 1974; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Wiemann, 1977).

Scholars contend that communication competence is more than just a "hoped-for" accomplishment in an interaction; it is necessary to one's ability to function adequately in society (Larson, Backlund, Redmond, & Barbour, 1978). According to Spitzberg and Brunner (1989), communication competence has been implicated in occupational success or failure, as well as a host of other social phenomena (e.g., academic success/failure, loneliness, self-esteem). Communication competence, then, can be considered an important aspect of the initial employment interview, as the interview presents a major turning point in one's occupational success or failure.

Employment Interviews

"Good communication skills" have been identified as a desired quality in job applicants (Goodall & Goodall, 1982). Thus, applicants who demonstrate competent communication in an initial employment interview may be evaluated more favorably than those who do not. However, male applicants generally tend to be evaluated more favorably than equally

qualified female applicants (Arvey, 1979; Arvey & Campion, 1982). Thus, there is a need to more clearly understand the relationship between gender and evaluations of competence, and specifically communication competence, in this task-related context.

A number of communication behaviors have been investigated within the context of an employment interview. For example, nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact and body posture (Hollandsworth, Kazelskis, Stevens, & Dressel, 1979), vocal qualities such as fluency of speech and dialect (Hopper, 1977) and content, particularly in relation to revealing unfavorable information about oneself (Rowe, 1989), have been investigated. One verbal form that has received little attention in the context of an employment interview is bragging. Bragging can be defined as boasting about oneself or one's achievements in a way that excludes contributions by or assistance from others.

Bragging has been shown to enhance one's rating of competence or ability when the audience has little or no other information to go on (e.g., when someone makes claims about either a past or future performance on a task) (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Consequently, bragging is one communication strategy that interviewees may use in an employment interview. However, women tend to be evaluated less favorably when they brag than do men (Miller, Cooke, Tsang, & Morgan, 1992). Thus, women who try to express

their job qualifications by bragging likely will be evaluated less favorably, by both male and female interviewers, than men who demonstrate the same behavior. It appears then, that men are at an advantage when competing against women for employment. Social norms seem to allow men more opportunity to expound upon their experiences and qualifications by bragging. And, because bragging can enhance one's rating of competence, i.e., general ability (Miller et al., 1992; Schlenker & Leary, 1982), men will tend to appear more competent than equally qualified women. Thus, understanding the influence of gender and communication behaviors such as bragging on evaluations of communication competence in an employment interview is important, particularly when such evaluations have implications for possible social and economic gains.

Gender and Communication Competence

A review of extant literature on communication competence reveals limited attention to gender differences (e.g., Duran, 1983; Larson et al., 1978; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Wiemann, 1977). The lack of attention to gender differences suggests that what we know about communication competence may not be equally applicable to both males and females and that the knowledge we have may be biased by a "male as norm" fallacy. According to Spence et al. (1985), until the 1980's, males tended to be regarded as the norm in much psychological research, and individual differences such

as gender were considered "nuisance variables" (p. 150). As a result, many empirical studies treated all persons identically, failing to account for behavioral differences based in gender socialization (Fitzpatrick, 1983). Given the overwhelming evidence that males and females differ in their communication styles and content (e.g., Birdwhistle, 1970; Gilligan, 1982; Zimmerman & West, 1975), they likely differ in communication behaviors that demonstrate effective and appropriate communication as well. In other words, behaviors that are evaluated as communicatively competent may differ for men and women.

Despite the probability that men and women perform communication competence differently, as they do other behaviors (e.g., self-disclosure, nonverbal) (for a review see Wallston & O'Leary, 1981), scholars continue to conduct research which fails to address the influence of gender. For example, in their test of a model and scale of communicator competence in the work place, Monge, Bachman, Dillard, and Eisenberg (1982) investigated the communication competence of supervisors and subordinates, but made no reference to gender differences in these positions. Likewise, in a recent investigation of social support among the elderly, Query, Parry, and Flint (1992) reported positive correlations between levels of cognitive depression, size of social support network, and communication competence. Although the authors associated

gender of respondent with size of social support network, they failed to articulate any direct association between communication competence and gender.

In summary, evaluations of the communication competence of both women and men likely will be based, to some degree, on expectations associated with gender stereotypes. Because men and women performing the same behavior often are evaluated differently by both men and women, what is evaluated as appropriate and effective communication behavior may differ for men and women. However, an initial perusal of the communication competence literature suggests that research, for the most part, has tended to ignored issues of gender in task-related contexts. Differences in evaluations of communication competence, particularly in task-related contexts such as employment interviews, may place women at a disadvantage, resulting in unequal employment opportunities and economic inequality.

Rationale

This research sought to investigate the influence of gender on evaluations of communication competence, communication effectiveness, and communication appropriateness. Men and women performing the same or similar behavior often are evaluated differently by both men and women. At issue in this study, was whether men and women who demonstrate the same communication behavior in an initial task-related context are evaluated equally in terms

of communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness.

Gender-role theory suggests that, based solely on gender, different normative behaviors are expected of men and women in a number of areas, including communication behaviors. Bragging appears to be one such communication behavior. Research (e.g., Miller et al., 1992) indicates that when men and women brag equally, women are evaluated less favorably than men who demonstrate the same behavior. Thus, bragging provides a framework from which the influence of gender on evaluations of communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness can begin to be assessed.

Purpose of the Study

Using gender-role theory as a basis for generating a set of hypotheses and research questions, the present study was designed to examine the influence of gender and bragging on evaluations of communication competence. Specifically, the study analyzed evaluations by men and women of the communication competence of other men and women engaging in the same communicative behavior--bragging--in a task-related initial interaction, the employment interview. The following chapters provide a review of literature related to gender-role theory and communication competence, a description of the procedures used in the study, a discussion and analysis of the results of the study, and a

discussion of findings and conclusions. Complete appendices and a reference list conclude this report.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The present study examines the influence of gender on evaluations of communication competence in a task-related initial interaction. This chapter provides a background for the study by reviewing the literature which relates to the nature of gender differences in social behavior, communication competence, employment interviews, and bragging. The chapter includes an examination of implications of the literature reviewed for the study of gender and evaluations of communication competence.

The Nature of Gender Differences

Three prominent theoretical perspectives attempt to explain the nature of gender differences: physiological premises, socialization and cultural explanations, and social-role theory. All three views have implications for communication behaviors and attributions about these behaviors.

Explanations Based on Physiology

A number of theorists argue that the biological differences between males and females result in predispositions to behave in predictably different ways. For example, the relatively higher levels of the hormone

testosterone typically found in males often is used to explain higher levels of aggression in males than females (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, 1980; Stockard & Johnson, 1980), although research has produced equivocal results (Deaux, 1985; Fausto-Sterling, 1985). Thus, from a physiological perspective, gender differences are argued to be genetically predetermined.

Physiological differences are more a matter of degree than kind. For example, both sexes possess all three groups of sex hormones (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972), but individuals differ in the amounts of each hormone that they possess. Differences in hormone levels often are argued to explain differences in male and female behavior (Jacklin, 1989), especially mood changes. For example, both men and women believe that some negative mood changes in women are the result of premenstrual hormone changes (Tavris, 1992). However, "the variability of moods in females has not been found significantly different from the variability of moods in males matched for lifestyles" (Basow, 1986, p. 31). The expectation of "mood changes" simply may be a self-fulfilling prophecy or a case of the same behavior being judged differently (Ramey, 1976).

Physical differences between males and females typically are greatest in terms of size, weight, and strength. Adult males typically are larger, heavier, and stronger than adult females. However, the significance of

even these sex differences is diminishing. Research has shown that women who receive regular athletic or physical strength training are comparable to men in athletic performance (Hall & Lee, 1984).

Differences in size, weight, and strength may account for a number of social distinctions made regarding appropriate behavior for men and women. The division of labor by sex is attributed to these physical differences (Basow, 1986). Certain occupations or labors have come to be more closely associated with members of one sex than the other (Tavris, 1992). Because of their smaller size and strength, women traditionally have been perceived to be more suited to nonthreatening work such as housework and child care. In contrast, because of their larger size and strength, men have been perceived to be more suited to competitive, dangerous, and strenuous work.

In summary, the physiological perspective presumes that males and females are inherently different from birth and that these differences predispose them to behave in different ways. However, an examination of differences from a physiological perspective shows that biological differences between the sexes are more a matter of degree than substance. According to Eagly (1987), the biological differences between men and women (e.g., men's greater physical size and strength), likely encourage, rather than

cause, men and women to exhibit behaviors that have come to be labeled masculine or feminine in a particular culture. Therefore, explanations of gender differences based on physiology fail to adequately explain the nature of gender differences.

Explanations Based on Culture

A culture consists of structures and practices that sustain social order by legitimizing and passing on certain values, beliefs, expectations, and patterns of behavior (Weedon, 1987). "Gender," as a social construct, is one "structure" and "practice" that is legitimized and passed on by culture.

Based on the cultural perspective, the behavior and identity of men and women are not determined by genes or hormones. Instead, gender identity results from the reconfirmation of biological sex through gender socialization (Basow, 1986). Through gender socialization, behaviors that conform to the social expectations associated with sex class are passed on from one generation to the next. Thus, the cultural point of view focuses on how people learn to view the world and the attitudes and beliefs about people as men and women that emerge from that view. Some scholars argue that U.S. American men and women actually grow up in different subcultures in which they learn different world views (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Maltz & Borker, 1982).

Gilligan (1982) and Maltz and Borker (1982) argue that sex differences demonstrated in the communication patterns of men and women have their origins in culture or, more accurately, in subculture. According to Maltz and Borker, people learn appropriate gender roles and the associated rules for interacting from their peer groups. Because childhood peer groups tend to be segregated, boys and girls essentially learn different ways of interacting and viewing the world. Thus, the interaction rules for men and women differ. Because rules and their conditions of application are culturally sanctioned (Ginsburg, 1988), the rules of interaction learned in childhood are resistant to change and consequently continue to be applied in adulthood.

The subculture of girls. Gilligan (1982) investigated gender differences by listening to the life experiences of boys and girls expressed in their talk. She found evidence that women experience a world of connection with others and often define themselves in terms of responsibilities to others. According to Maltz and Borker (1982), "friendship is seen by girls as involving intimacy, equality, mutual commitment, and loyalty. The idea of 'best friend' is central for girls" (p. 205). In addition, relationships for girls tend to be formed through talk and inclusive language forms such as "us" and "we" are common. Although conflicts do arise, girls learn to criticize and argue with others in ways that are not viewed as overly aggressive or "bossy."

Maltz and Borker contend that the patterns of communication evident in adult women's conversation show a marked similarity to the talk of girls.

The subculture of boys. Gilligan (1982) found that men experience a world of individuation. That is, men tend to separate themselves from others, a behavior that allows them to emphasize the individual while deemphasizing relationships with others. In contrast to the equality emphasized among girls, boys tend to play in hierarchically organized groups (Maltz & Borker, 1982). Status always is changing as boys move from one group to another. Also in contrast to girls, boys use speech for the expression of dominance rather than relationship formation. Verbal commands, verbal ridicule, and verbal threats or boasts of authority are common features of boys' speech. In addition, boys are likely to engage in storytelling and joke telling as a way of gaining and maintaining audience attention. As is the case with girls and women, Maltz and Borker find striking resemblances between adult men's speaking patterns and those observed in boys.

In summary, because boys and girls maintain segregated groups, they fail to learn the cultural rules that guide the activities of the other sex. These cultural differences lead men and women to have different conceptualizations of conversation, rules for engaging in conversation, and rules for interpreting conversation (Maltz & Borker, 1982). For

example, women seem to use minimal responses such as "yes" and "mm hmm" as an affirmation of attention to the speaker while men use the same responses to indicate agreement with the speaker. Different conceptualizations, rules, and interpretations of conversation obviously can lead to different evaluations of the same behavior. The cultural or socialization explanation for gender differences suggests that patterns of sex-specific behaviors learned in childhood, guide the activities and relationships of adult men and women.

The cultural approach to explanations of gender differences has its critics. One consistent criticism of the approach is the assertion that learned behaviors remain relatively unchanged from childhood through adulthood (e.g., Eagly, 1987; Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992). As Johnson (1993) explains, "the socialization perspective predicts that without specific training to eliminate gender effects" (p. 194), gender will continue to affect the behavior of men and women in stereotypic ways. Critics argue that men and women continue to learn and change as their situations change (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992). Social-role theory, which provides the theoretical basis for the present study, accounts for these changes and regards the cultural perspective as a necessary but not sufficient explanation of gender differences.

Explanations Based on Social-Role

Social-role theorists (e.g., Eagly, 1987) contend that gender differences are a product of the situational roles men and women play and that people act in accordance with the demands of the roles they are assigned in a given situation. Overall, people form their gender role expectations from observing what men and women do. According to Ridgeway and Diekema (1992), "what they see is men, because of their work roles, engaging in more agentic behaviors (task-oriented, directive behaviors) than women, and women, due to their homemaker roles, enacting more communal (interpersonally oriented) behaviors than men" (p. 166).

Eagly (1987) differentiates between the social-role and socialization perspectives on gender differences. The social-role perspective is a structural approach that suggests that "members of social groups experience common situational constraints because they tend to have the same or similar social positions within organizations and other structures such as families" (p. 9). However, the socialization perspective is a cultural approach that suggests, "members of social groups acquire common beliefs and values because of the socialization pressures they experience during childhood" (p. 9). Thus, the social-role perspective focuses on the behavioral expectations associated with one's position in a hierarchy (structure)

rather than cultural beliefs and values. Eagly argues, "sex differences reflect the differing social positions of women and men more strongly than differing beliefs and values that may be instilled during childhood socialization" (p. 9).

According to Eagly (1987), people have a social role based solely on their gender. "Gender roles are defined as those shared expectations (about appropriate qualities and behaviors) that apply to individuals on the basis of their socially identified gender" (p. 12). Many aspects of gender stereotypes make up the social norms associated with gender roles (Eagly, 1987).

Eagly posits three criteria for social norms associated with gender roles. First, society comes to regard stereotypic sex differences as both appropriate and desirable. People not only perceive sex differences in behavior, but believe men and women ought to differ in many ways. Second, there is high consensus on what differences exist and the desirability of these differences. Third, the society is aware of the consensus regarding the ways in which men and women ought to differ. Thus, when men and women conform to different gender roles, they also conform to different norms of appropriate behavior.

Gender roles "induce stereotypic sex differences" (Eagly, 1987, p. 31). Conformity to gender roles and the normative behaviors associated with those roles, coupled with a belief that the behaviors are socially desirable,

generates expectations of one's own behavior as well as that of others.

Eagly (1987) and Ridgeway and Diekema (1992) emphasize the importance of proximate causes of behavioral differences. These scholars argue that gender role may not be the salient social role operating in a given interaction. For example, in the interaction between a male executive and his female secretary, work roles may provide a more accurate explanation of behaviors than gender roles. "Gender role expectations determine behavior directly only when other roles in the situation are ambiguous" (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992, p. 166).

Research clearly and consistently indicates that men and women performing the same behavior often are evaluated differently (cf. Bradley, 1984; Foschi, 1992; Goldberg, 1968; Smith & DeWine, 1991; Wallston & O'Leary, 1981). Gender-role theory suggests that differences in evaluations can be attributed to the disparate normative and stereotypic behavior expected of men and women based on their unequal positions in society. However, gender-role theory predicts that when men and women occupy equal positions within an institution, evaluations of behavior should be relatively similar.

As males and females mature, most will take on an increasing number of social-roles (e.g., spouse, parent, employee, employer) while retaining many of the former roles

(e.g., child, sibling, man, woman). Because of the ever-changing nature and number of roles individuals hold within society, gender-role theory provides a more reasonable explanation for existing gender differences, and evaluations of those differences, than does either the physiological or cultural explanations. Therefore, gender-role theory is the theoretical perspective guiding this research.

The Nature of Communication Competence

Spitzberg and Hecht (1984) and Wiemann (1977) suggest that communication competence involves impression formation. Thus, communication competence may not be simply a matter of what is effective and appropriate for a given context and relationship, but what is effective and appropriate for the gender of the participants as well. However, little attention has been given to the influence of gender on evaluations of communication competence. Therefore, this section examines the nature of communication competence, providing a discussion of the historical perspective of communication competence, issues surrounding the definition of communication competence, and communication competence as it relates to gender.

A Historical Perspective

The study of effective communication has its origins in rhetoric and Aristotle often is cited as the single most influential figure in rhetoric (McCroskey, 1984; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). As McCroskey (1984) points out, the label

"communication competence" may be relatively new in our field, but the concept is "a continuation of a centuries-old tradition" (p. 260). Although Aristotle emphasized persuasion in his teaching, he also addressed issues of audience adaptation, topoi, and credibility. According to Spitzberg and Cupach (1984), "rhetoric introduced the systematic 'art' of effective communication and provided a forum for accumulating knowledge about using actions and symbols to accomplish specific objectives" (p. 31). Thus, communication competence from a rhetorical perspective encompasses effectiveness. That is, not only must a person be able to express him- or herself "eloquently," but he or she must be able to do so in a manner that leads to "the accomplishment of a desired effect" (p. 15) (i.e., goal attainment).

In contrast to the overt performance traditional in rhetoric, the linguistic perspective of competence focuses on the underlying mental structures that allow persons to construct speech. The linguistic approach to communication competence has its origins in the work of Noam Chomsky. Chomsky (1965) viewed competence as "the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language" (p. 4). Chomsky made a clear distinction between competence and performance. Whereas competence was knowledge of language, Chomsky viewed performance as the use of language in situations and nothing more than a vehicle for demonstrating competence (i.e., how

well a person knows his or her language). Chomsky was not concerned with communication or the impact of context and social conditions on performance. Nevertheless, linguistic competence is important to an understanding of communication competence because linguistic skills represent the minimal level of communication competence (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984).

Hymes (1972), a sociolinguist, challenged Chomsky's (1965) conceptualizations of competence and performance. Hymes (1972) viewed Chomsky's focus on knowledge of language structure (competence) to the exclusion of situational factors that influenced language use (performance) as unrealistic. Hymes expanded the notion of competence, labeling it "communicative competence" (Cooley & Roach, 1984), and argued that a person's competence refers to knowledge of language and knowledge of how, when, and where to use the language. According to Hymes,

> A normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. (p. 277)

Thus, Hymes included the notion of context and appropriateness (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984) in his conceptualization of communicative competence. That is, not only does a person learn how to speak, but he or she also learns to use language in a way that does not violate social norms.

Whereas Chomsky's (1965) conceptualization of linguistic competence focused on knowledge of grammatical rules, Hymes' perspective on communicative competence implied "knowledge of cultural, social, and interpersonal rules for acceptability of behavior" (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, p. 67). Hymes recognized that factors other than just knowledge of language affect the performance of competent communication.

In summary, communication competence, as it is studied today, includes attention to effective communication traditional in rhetoric, as well as attention to appropriate communication traditional in sociolinguistics. Perhaps because of the diffuse history of communication competence (Cooley & Roach, 1984; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984), a precise definition of the construct remains elusive.

Contemporary Issues in Defining Communication Competence

In any discussion of communication competence, the first "problem" is defining the concept. Wiemann and Backlund (1980) and Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) suggest that the primary problem with defining "communication competence" stems from the wide range of definitions and studies of "competence" that can be found in the literature. Theorists and researchers use a variety of terms to designate communication competence. For example, scholars use terms such as "interpersonal competence," "communicative

competence," "social competence," and "relational competence" (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989).

Readers often must judge for themselves where the differences, if any, lie between the term "communication competence" and an author's use of another term. According to Spitzberg and Cupach (1989), various authors use these terms with little consistency. For example, Larson et al. (1978) state that "interpersonal competence" often is used as a synonym for "communication competence." Yet, Larson et al. view communication competence and interpersonal competence as distinctively <u>different</u> concepts. They describe interpersonal competence as communication focused on goal achievement. In contrast, communication competence is defined as "the ability to demonstrate knowledge of the communicative behavior appropriate in a given situation" (p. 21). As Phillips (1983) states, "defining competence is like trying to climb a greased pole" (p. 24).

The voluminous nature of the literature represents a variety of focal points in conceptualizing communication competence. Spitzberg and Cupach (1989) categorized the attempts to define communication competence according to four dichotomies: outcome-focused versus message-focused; state versus trait; molar versus molecular; and, cognitive versus behavioral. These dichotomies provide an organized way to discuss the "huge and fragmented" (p. 2) literature on communication competence.

Outcome-focused versus message-focused. Outcome-focused approaches to communication competence are concerned primarily with goal achievement in interaction. The ability to adapt to changing social and environmental conditions in order to achieve desired outcomes is viewed as a fundamental aspect of social competence (Duran, 1983; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Thus, from an outcome-focused perspective, adaptability generally is considered the vital aspect of communication competence.

Message-focused approaches to communication competence are concerned primarily with linguistic competence and message content (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Linguistic competence focuses on knowledge of the language while a sociolinguistic perspective focuses on knowledge of how, when, and where to use the language. Thus, message-focused approaches attend to the ability to generate appropriate messages and language for varied contexts.

Trait versus state. As a trait, communication competence spans "place, time, and activity to reflect a proclivity or tendency across contexts" (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, p. 85). The trait approach implies that an individual either is competent or incompetent in general.

As a state, communication competence is context specific, "manifested in a specific communicative encounter, and not necessarily across encounters" (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, p. 88). A states approach implies that individuals

vary in competence as communication situations vary. Thus, an individual's competence is judged within the parameters of a given context rather than in general. For example, Morse and Piland (1981) found differences in the communication competencies nurses felt they needed in their relationships with other nurses, patients, and physicians, indicating that the same behaviors were not appropriate for all three relationships.

A number of scholars argue that communication competence is both state and trait. Thus, neither communication competence as state nor trait can be ignored (Duran, 1983; Parks, 1985; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Wiemann & Bradac, 1989; Wiemann & Kelly, 1981). As Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) suggest, state and trait competence are not mutually exclusive. Traits such as self esteem and rigidity, contribute to situational competence when they facilitate or hinder appropriate and effective communication.

Molar versus molecular. Molar approaches focus on global and abstract perceptions of communication competence such as credibility or empathy. Molecular approaches focus on specific communication behaviors such as asking questions or listening. Molecular approaches often are labelled "skills" approaches. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) argue that both molar and molecular impressions must be considered when assessing communication competence, because people appear to

assess both specific and general behaviors when forming impressions of conversations and conversants. Thus, competent communicators must concern themselves with global impression making as well as the performance of specific situationally appropriate communication skills.

Cognitive versus behavioral. Cognitive conceptualizations of communication competence conceive of competence as "a mental phenomenon distinct and separate from behavior" (Wiemann & Backlund, 1980, p. 187). The cognitive perspective mirrors Chomsky's (1965) notion of linguistic competence as knowledge of language and its distinction from performance of language within a speech community. This approach to communication competence seeks to discover the cognitive structures that underlie communication events, but is not concerned with the event per se'. Wiemann and Backlund explain that the goal of the cognitive perspective is "to develop a set of formalized rules that would act as a generative source for specific communication events" (p. 187).

Behavioral conceptualizations of communication competence focus on actual communication behavior. When defined in terms of "fitness or ability" (Wiemann & Backlund, 1980, p. 187), "competence" clearly implies behavior. Scholars who speak of communication competence in terms such as "adaptability," "demonstrate knowledge," or "ability" are suggesting that communication competence

extends beyond the cognitive and includes behavior as well (e.g., Duran, 1983; Larson et al., 1978; Wiemann, 1977). Thus, behavioral approaches acknowledge a cognitive dimension of communication competence (knowledge) but consider overt demonstration (performance) a necessary component of competence. Consequently, Wiemann and Backlund (1980) and Wiemann and Bradac (1989) argue for the inclusion of both cognitive and behavioral processes in any conceptualization of communication competence.

These four dichotomies are not mutually exclusive. In fact, to refer to these attempts to conceptualize communication competence as "dichotomies" is misleading. "Dichotomy" implies that to include one end of a spectrum is to exclude the other end. However, insufficient evidence exists to exclude any position from consideration. For instance, molecular and molar approaches certainly are concerned with behavior and cognition. Likewise, state and trait concerns overlap those of behavior, cognition, molecular and molar approaches. And, neither outcome nor message focuses can be considered seriously without addressing issues involved in state, behavior, molecular, and molar approaches as well. Consequently, defining communication competence remains a difficult problem. Therefore, each researcher must choose for him or herself the position(s) he or she will take, recognizing that the

choice is based on personal preference rather than existing theory.

In the present study, communication competence is conceptualized as "a person's ability to interact flexibly with others in a dyadic setting so that the communication is seen as appropriate and effective for the context" (Rubin, Martin, Bruning, & Powers, 1993, p. 210). This definition has been selected because it addresses state more strongly than trait and more behavioral than cognitive properties of communication. In short, this conceptualization of communication competence focuses on what is happening in a specific interaction. Furthermore, it explicitly includes aspects of appropriateness and effectiveness. Despite the lack of agreement on a single definition for communication competence, most authorities in the area of communication competence do agree on some basic underlying assumptions.

Basic Assumptions of Communication Competence

Assumptions underlying the conceptualization of communication competence have implications for both theory and measurement. Based on a review of the literature, five primary assumptions of communication competence were identified. First is the assumption that interaction includes an evaluation of the communicators. Second, in order to be judged communicatively competent, communicators must be effective (i.e., achieve a desired goal). Third, the communication must be appropriate to the context and

relationship (i.e., not violate social norms). Next, the competent communicator must be adaptable. Lastly, communication competence is context specific.

Interaction with evaluation. At a minimum, communication competence requires dyadic interaction (Wiemann, 1977). In the context of that interaction, communicators evaluate one's own and the other's competence (Bochner & Kelly, 1974; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). As Roloff and Kellermann (1984) explain, a person may possess skills or traits that facilitate competence, but he or she is not competent until judged so by either self, another interactant, or a third party. Roloff and Kellermann "argue that competence is inherently an evaluative judgment of a person's behavior rather than a skill or trait possessed by an individual" (p. 175).

Effectiveness and goal attainment. Wiemann (1977) argues that most schools of thought on communication competence characterize competence in terms of effectiveness. That is, competent communication, by definition, facilitates the accomplishment of goals within an encounter. Thus, interactional control is central to effectiveness (i.e., goal attainment). According to Parks (1985), control over one's environment in order to attain goals is at the core of almost all conceptualizations of communication competence.

Most scholars agree that effectiveness (goal attainment) is necessary, but is not sufficient for communication competence. The demonstration of communication competence requires communicators to manage some degree of goal attainment, but the goals must be attained appropriately (Spitzberg, 1983; Wiemann, 1977).

Appropriateness and mutual satisfaction. Communication that is appropriate avoids violation of situational (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Larson et al., 1978) and relational standards (Canary & Cupach, 1988). Criteria for "appropriateness" are established by explicit and implicit cultural norms (Wiemann & Backlund, 1980). Because evaluations of appropriateness are based on normative behavior, self, other, and third party observers expect communicators to behave appropriately. Failure to adhere to normative expectations can result in negative evaluations and sanctions for the inappropriate communicator.

Whether goals are achieved or not, one anticipated end result of interaction is continued mutual satisfaction with the relationship. Even if interactants disagree, those who do so with a sufficient level of communication competence generally will find that no permanent harm is done to the relationship (Spitzberg, 1983; Spitzberg & Hecht, 1984).

Another aspect of appropriateness is congruency. Within the context of an interaction, communicators should "make sense." That is, interactants should display

consistency between topics, meet informational requirements, and structure their communication style to the situation and particular relationship at hand (Larson et al., 1978; Wiemann & Backlund, 1980). Consequently, self, other, or a third party observer would expect communicators to exhibit appropriate normative behavior in verbal content and style as they engage in communicative interactions. Failure to do so could result in misunderstandings, confusion, and potential relational damage. Normative behaviors may vary by situation. Therefore, adaptability is an important aspect of communication competence.

Adaptability. In order to be judged competent, communicators must be able to adapt their messages and their behaviors to varied situations (Bochner & Kelly, 1974; Duran, 1983; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Goals change in an ongoing way throughout an interaction (Diez, 1984), making adaptation to the given context a necessity (Spitzberg & Brunner, 1991). The premise of adaptability suggests that both interactants monitor the effectiveness and appropriateness of self and other as the interaction unfolds. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) suggest that effectiveness and appropriateness can be independent of each other. However, in most instances they are correlated as interactants adapt to the conditions of the particular interaction in order to achieve changing goals.

Context specific. Spitzberg and Brunner (1991) contend that most competence theorists consider it axiomatic that competence is contingent upon the context in which the communication is judged. Evaluations of communication are tied closely to normative expectations which vary from one environment to another and from one relationship to another. For example, communication behaviors that are appropriate for the pool room may not be appropriate for the board room. And communication behaviors that are appropriate with a superior may not be appropriate with a best friend. Therefore, behavior seen as competent in one context may not be evaluated as competent in another context (Larson et al., 1978).

Although communication competence has been conceptualized a number of ways depending on the focus of the individual researcher (e.g., interpersonal competence or social skills), two dimensions recur across these conceptualizations: Appropriateness and effectiveness. The recurrence of appropriateness and effectiveness in the underlying assumptions about communication competence across pedagogical, interpersonal, social skills, and other areas of study, has lead some scholars (e. g., Bochner & Kelly, 1974; Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Cupach & Spitzberg, 1983; Wiemann, 1977) to conclude that appropriateness and effectiveness are fundamental properties of communication competence.

In summary, at a minimum, communication competence requires dyadic interaction in which participants attempt to achieve personal goals. Goals must be achieved appropriately so that no harm is done to the relationship. Furthermore, interactants must be able to adapt to circumstances as contexts change. An especially important context in which evaluation, goal achievement, appropriateness, and adaptability are essential is task-related dyadic interaction. Communication competence in task-related interactions can have long-term consequences for social and occupational success.

Communication Competence in Task-Related Contexts

Spitzberg and Brunner (1989) indicate that communication competence has been implicated in occupational success. As they explain, "people who consistently are more competent in interaction stand to receive greater social rewards from their interaction experiences than those who are inappropriate and ineffective" (p. 122). Thus, understanding variables (e.g., gender) that influence evaluations of communication competence in task-related contexts is important.

Reiser and Troost (1986) investigated the influence of sex and gender-role identity on evaluations of communication competence in a task setting. Respondents worked together for 15 weeks, after which they evaluated themselves and other group members on three dimensions of Wiemann's (1977)

Communicative Competence Scale (empathy, behavioral flexibility, and affiliation/support). Respondents also completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory, a questionnaire containing measures of psychological gender-role identity (feminine, masculine, androgynous, or undifferentiated). Gender-role identity did not predict perceptions of the communication competence of females, but did for males.

For males, ratings of communication competence differed by gender-role type. Feminine males were rated most communicatively competent and androgynous males were rated least competent by others. The reverse pattern occurred when males evaluated themselves. Females, regardless of gender-role identity, were judged high on communication competence by both self and others. The authors suggest that femininity is associated with empathy, affiliation, and support. Thus, females, regardless of their psychological gender-role identity, and feminine males might be expected to demonstrate these qualities to a greater degree than masculine males. The contradiction between self- and other-ratings for males indicates that men's perceptions of their communication behaviors are not congruent with how others see them. Reiser and Troost (1986) suggest that the ways men and women demonstrate appropriateness and effectiveness in a task-related context results in differential evaluations of communication competence.

Smith and DeWine (1991) examined superiors' perceptions of subordinates asking for help. They hypothesized that superiors attribute an employee's effectiveness to communication competence. Respondents in the study viewed two videotapes. One tape presented a male employee asking a supervisor for help with a work-related problem and the second tape presented a female employee demonstrating the same request. Respondents assumed the role of supervisor and after viewing the tapes completed a questionnaire designed to report perceptions of the communicative competence of the employee. There were no significant differences in perceptions of communication competence based on sex of the superior (respondent). However, differences did appear based on sex of employee. Female subordinates who asked for help were rated higher in communication competence than male subordinates by both male and female respondents. The authors suggest that the differences found are due to the stereotype that it is more permissible for females than males to seek help. This study provides evidence that men and women performing the same communication behavior are likely to be evaluated differently in terms of communication competence.

The two investigations discussed above indicate that when males and females perform the same or similar behavior in task-related situations, they receive different evaluations of communication competence. As more women

enter college and the work force, incidence for evaluations and comparisons of men's and women's communication competence in task-related contexts will increase. One task-related context in which evaluations of "competence" are particularly significant is the employment interview.

The Nature of Employment Interviews

The employment interview often involves initial interaction (Baron, 1986; Goodall & Goodall, 1982). Stewart and Cash (1988) describe the interview as "a process of dyadic, relational communication" (p. 3) in which the participants interact with a predetermined goal.

Researchers have identified a number of variables that influence the outcome of employment interviews. (For reviews see Arvey & Campion, 1982; Schmitt, 1976; Street, 1986.) For example, investigations have focused on nonverbal behaviors (e.g., gaze, attractiveness), language style (e.g., dysfluencies, accents), and, to a lesser extent, on content of an applicant's communication (e.g., questions, unfavorable information). Hollandsworth et al. (1979) conclude that nonverbal communication is important, but suggest that "what to say" (p. 364) appears to be more crucial. When content has been examined, researchers have found appropriateness of content to be a significant factor in determining success of the interview (Hollandsworth et al., 1979).

Interviewers anticipate and desire positive self-statements from job applicants (Clowers & Fraser, 1977; Gilmore & Ferris, 1989; Keil & Barbee, 1973) as well as specific information relating to technical expertise (Hunt & Eadie, 1987; Shaw, 1983). As Gilmore and Ferris (1989) explain, "the employment interview encourages opportunistic behavior by job applicants if they are at all interested in the job in question" (p. 197). Shaw (1983) contends that applicants expect opportunities in the interview to reveal aspects of their background and competence. And, in fact, Einhorn (1981) found that successful job applicants revealed more about themselves and their specific abilities and experience than did unsuccessful job applicants. Thus, it seems important that job applicants convey images of themselves as competent and thoroughly qualified individuals.

As is typical of other initial interactions, interviewers often have little information about an applicant prior to the interaction (Hunt & Eadie, 1987) and thus rely on general impressions and behaviors exhibited during the interview as a basis for employment decisions. Posner (1981) found that the majority of employment recruiters have no formal training in interviewing and fail to establish specific goals and objectives by which an applicant will be judged. Consequently, applicants often are judged according to the personal attitudes and values of

the interviewer rather than specific job-related skills (Austin & Vines, 1980; Tschirgi, 1973). In addition, interviewers often have their own personal stereotypes of what constitutes a "good" employee and about how this perceived "good" employee should behave in an interview (Schmitt, 1976). Thus, gender role may become either more or less salient based on the prototype of the "ideal" job applicant.

Such a situation can be extremely disadvantageous for female applicants competing against male applicants. Women often are at a disadvantage in hiring decisions (Arvey, 1979; Cann, Siegfried, & Pearce, 1981; Dipboye, Arvey, & Terpstra, 1977) because of perceived incongruity between feminine skills and masculine job requirements (Cohen & Bunker, 1975). Thus, as Arvey and Campion (1982) explain, knowing the gender of an applicant may affect "expectations, stereotypes, and behaviors of an interviewer which in turn may affect the interview outcome" (p. 282). According to West and Zimmerman (1987), even in formal interactions such as an employment interview, individuals are subject to evaluation in terms of appropriate behavior for their gender.

Given that the outcome of an employment interview often can have important consequences, such as being hired, applicants must be able to present themselves in the most positive light possible. However, presentation of expertise

can place the applicant in a dilemma. With low status as a communicator in the interview context, the applicant is advised to speak assertively at the same time he or she is being judged by an interviewer who may find such assertiveness to be presumptuous or arrogant (Ragan, 1983). For women, who face potential bias in the selection process based on gender, presentation of expertise and experience may be particularly problematic. A woman may likely be "dammed if she does and dammed if she doesn't."

Bragging is one means by which a job applicant can reveal his or her expertise and experience which, according to Einhorn (1981), is necessary to success. As the job market tightens, with more competition for jobs, one tactic used by applicants to "get the edge" is to project competence and expertise (Baron, 1986, p. 16). Although bragging does not enjoy widespread social acceptance, it may be one way to project competence and expertise and thereby gain an advantage in the job market.

The Nature of Bragging

Frequently individuals reveal information about themselves in order to achieve some goal (e.g., make a good impression) (Miller et al., 1992). However, Miller et al. conclude that it is not at all clear how what we say affects other's impressions of us. According to Goffman (1959), people are more concerned about impressing high status people than low status people. Thus, self-enhancing or

boastful statements are more likely in the presence of high-status persons (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). For example, the employment interview is inherently hierarchial, and the lower status applicant seeking to favorably impress the higher status interviewer is likely to make self-enhancing statements.

Vallacher, Wegner, and Frederick (1987) describe boastful individuals as "people who emphasize their accomplishment and general effectiveness" (p. 301). Cooke and Miller (cited in Miller et al., 1992) distinguish boasting or bragging from simply "telling about your accomplishments." Specifically, bragging, as opposed to positive self description, (1) contains more superlatives such as "best," (2) contains references to doing better than another or having power over others, (3) demonstrates less surprise at success, (4) has less emphasis on hard work and more emphasis on being a "wonderful" person, (5) presents less emphasis on helping the group, and (6) indicates more sense of deserving one's successful outcome. According to Miller et al., individuals distinguish between communication that is boastful and that which is simply positive self-description. Any use of the six characteristics identified by Cook and Miller, and later confirmed by Miller et al., is characterized as boasting or bragging. However, as the number of bragging characteristics displayed increases, ratings of likability decreases.

According to Schlenker and Leary (1982), people are willing to boast and are more likely to be self-enhancing when they believe the audience does not have knowledge of their successes. In addition, Vallacher et al. (1987) suggest that self-description is highly likely in settings involving appraisal from others. Consequently, a job applicant engaging in an initial interaction with an interviewer is likely to provide self-enhancing information. Tedeschi and Melburg (1984) indicate that self-enhancing statements are intended to persuade the target of the speaker's positive qualities and "this tactic is an integral part of any formal interviewing session" (p. 38).

When looked at together, gender, communication competence, employment interviews, and bragging form a complex relationship. Gender appears to be an important variable in interview outcomes, evaluations of bragging, and evaluations of communication competence. The sections that follow examine the relationships between communication competence and gender, employment interviews, and bragging.

Communication Competence and Gender

Duran (1989) characterizes research concerning gender differences and communication competence as "disjointed and atheoretical" (p. 216). In most studies of gender and communication competence, gender is not the focus of the research, but rather constitutes only one of several variables being considered. Thus, gender differences in

evaluations of communication competence are ignored in most cases and reported in passing in others. When gender is considered in investigations of communication competence, differences often are found. The lack of attention given to gender in the development of a theory of communication competence is unfortunate. The literature concerned with gender studies suggests obvious differences in the way men and women perform communication behaviors and in the way men and women exhibiting the same communication behaviors are evaluated.

Gender Differences in Communication

Most "sex differences" between women and men are based on stereotypes rather than biology. In other words, there is little physiological basis for the perceived "differences." Therefore, stereotypes of the passive, compliant, dependent, attentive woman and the aggressive, analytic, independent, active man continue to influence communication behaviors and expectations of behaviors.

Spitzack and Carter (1987) contend that the most pervasive area of research on sex differences and communication is language behavior analyses and that studies tend to focus on one of three areas: (1) sex differences in phonology, pitch, intonation, lexicon, and meaning, (2) the relation between perception and role expectation and the extent to which language behavior (e.g., profanity or shouting) is perceived as masculine or feminine, and (3)

issues of communication competence with a focus on gender differences in language use (e.g., tag questions and disclaimers).

Research has revealed significant sex differences in each of these three areas. For example, certain communication behaviors, such as the use of nonstandard English and profanity, are perceived to be more closely associated with masculinity than femininity. According to Deuchar (1989), women tend to produce speech closer to the standard in pronunciation than do men. Trudgill (1975) suggests that men value nonstandard speech and associate it with masculinity. Likewise, men are more likely to use profanity than women (Key, 1975; Lakoff, 1975) and de Klerk (1991) contends that expletives frequently serve to distinguish men from women.

In contrast to <u>different</u> language use perpetuating different evaluations of communication competence, <u>identical</u> language use can also result in different evaluations for men and women. According to Spitzack and Carter (1987),

> Identical communication behaviors, such as the use of tag questions, often lead to different competence evaluations depending on speaker sex. For example, when a woman says, "It's a nice day, isn't it?" she is thought to lack authority, thereby reducing her competence; when a man makes the same utterance, he is perceived as an open and congenial conversation partner, thus elevating his level of competence. (p. 408).

If interactants base their evaluations of one another's communication competence on adherence to gender-role

expectations, then the degree of adherence to those gender roles has implications for evaluations of communication competence. As noted above, what is appropriate communication behavior for a man not be evaluated as appropriate for a woman (e.g., profanity, shouting, or bragging). Likewise, behaviors that influence effectiveness, such as directness and instrumentality, are more strongly associated with masculine behavior than with feminine behavior. Therefore, what men and women choose to do to affect goal achievement might, or sometimes must, be different. Thus, a closer look at the influence of gender on evaluations of effective and appropriate communication behavior seems in order.

Gender Differences in Evaluations

The success of any attempt to study or teach communication competence is contingent upon understanding what influences interactants' evaluations of each other. Extant theory and research related to gender point to the fact that men and women performing the same behavior often are evaluated differently. Research in areas such as competence and attribution theory provide ample evidence of differential evaluations of men and women. These differences suggest likely differences in evaluations of men and women in task-related environments.

Competence. Investigations of "competence" often are not examinations of communication competence per se.

Rather, many published articles relating to "competence" appear to be investigations of some level of professional competence or general ability in a task-related context. Nevertheless, communication competence often is implied in these studies (e.g., Bradley, 1980).

A number of studies provide examples of the ubiquitous use of the term "competence" without offering a clear explanation of what the concept entails. For example, Lewis and Bierly (1990) investigated how men and women differ in their evaluations of the attractiveness and "competence" of female and male political candidates. Although respondents rated candidates on "competence," what the term means in this instance is not clear.

In an investigation of job related "competence," Lott (1985) sought to identify conditions under which "competent" women were more likely to be negatively evaluated than comparable men. However, the qualities or behaviors which constitute a "competent" woman or man were not stated clearly. Quina et al. (1987) used categories of language style from Lakoff (1975) to investigate "stereotypic gender characteristics, competence, personality, assertiveness" (p. 113). They found that greater "competence," but less social warmth, was attributed to masculine speech patterns than to feminine speech patterns. Unfortunately, once again, the authors did not clarify the concept of "competence."

Wallston and O'Leary (1981) contend that the behavioral

similarities between men and women are greater than the differences. Despite evidence that supports their claim, "the belief in sex differences persists" (p. 10). Therefore, individuals tend to apply different interpretations to the same behavior. Although, as Wallston and O'Leary point out, research focused on differential evaluations of men and women typically is based on stereotypes, the perception of difference ultimately influences the evaluation of behaviors and the individuals performing those behaviors.

Attribution theory. People have a need to understand events and behaviors and consequently, tend to generate "lay theories" to explain them. According to Wallston and O'Leary (1982), these "lay theories" may explain the persistence of beliefs in sex differences. Work grounded in attribution theory provides evidence that perceivers often have different causal explanations for the same behaviors of women and men and that

> explanations offered for the success or failure of women and men differ markedly . . . . A man's successful performance on a task is generally attributed to skill, whereas a woman's identical performance is attributed to effort or luck. On the other hand, men's failure is attributed to (bad) luck, women's to (low) ability. (p. 24)

The tendency to view men's success on a task as the result of ability and women's equal success on the same task as the result of luck is most consistent when the task is one in which men are expected to excel. For example, Deaux and

Emswiller (1974) found that both male and female respondents attributed successful performance by a man on a "male-oriented" task (i.e, a task such as mechanical repair that is culturally sex-linked) to skill, while the same performance by a woman was attributed to luck. Cash, Kehr, Polyson, and Freeman (1977) found that both men and women were more likely to attribute men's failure on a masculine task to bad luck than women's failure on a feminine task. Women's failure on a feminine task was more likely to be attributed to task difficulty than bad luck.

Research based in attribution theory indicates that when men and women exhibit similar behaviors, the explanations of those behaviors are likely to be different. Consequently, women who are communicatively competent in a task-related context may be perceived as "lucky," while men who perform similarly may be perceived as "skilled" in communication. The implication is that "luck" is a situational occurrence for a woman, but "skill" is dispositional for a man. Deaux and Emswiller (1974) caution that if similar evaluations occur outside the experimental context, the potential for discrimination against women (or groups for whom expectations are low) may be "less easily eliminated by objective evidence of a good performance" (p. 84).

In summary, evaluations of competence and attributions of success or failure on tasks appear to be influenced by

expectations of stereotypic male and female behavior. If, as extant literature suggests, similar behaviors are evaluated differently for men and women, then what counts as communication competence for men and women may differ as well. Different evaluations of communication competence can be particularly significant in the work place because, as Spitzberg and Brunner (1989) have suggested, communication competence has implications for occupational success.

Evaluations of communication competence are influenced by a number of variables such as the specific communication behavior demonstrated, gender of communicator, and context. An axiom of communication competence is that evaluations of communication competence are context specific. That is, which communication behaviors are effective and appropriate depend upon conditions such as the relationship of the interactants, the physical setting, the events unfolding, etc. Contexts may be either social or task-related. One important task-related environment is the employment interview.

Communication Competence and Employment Interviews

The employment interview presents a particularly consequential instance of task related interpersonal communication in which to consider evaluations of communication competence. For persons seeking employment, being effective and appropriate (i.e., communicatively competent) in the employment interview is vital. By

definition, employment interviews are goal-oriented interactions (Stewart & Cash, 1988). The interviewer and the applicant seek information from and provide information to the other. The applicant seeks to gain information about the interviewer, job, and organization in an effort to make both a positive impression and an informed decision. Likewise, the interviewer provides information about the job and organization, attempts to make a favorable impression on the applicant, and seeks information about the applicant which will assist in making a decision to hire.

Appropriateness of verbal content (Hollandsworth et al., 1979) and nonverbal behavior (Linden & Parsons, 1989) have been identified as important variables in determining an applicant's success in an interview. However, Hollandsworth et al. (1979) and Linden and Parsons (1989) suggest that appropriateness of verbal content (i.e., the kind of information presented) is more salient to a successful outcome than appropriateness of nonverbal behaviors. Thus, evaluations of communication competence are inherent in the employment interview. Furthermore, actual decisions regarding job offers may be based on evaluations of communication competence, especially as employers increasingly identify communication skills as a priority in hiring (Goodall & Goodall, 1982).

If men and women are evaluated differently by both men and women, evaluations of applicant communication

competence could provide one explanation for the consistent findings of male applicants being preferred over female applicants (Arvey, 1979; Dipboye et al., 1977). Men and women may need to exhibit different, rather than similar, communicative behaviors in the employment interview in order to gain positive evaluations. That is, communication behaviors that are congruent with one's gender role may have more affect on evaluations of communication competence than the amount of information revealed. Presenting a positive self-image may involve communicating in a manner consistent with expectations associated with gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes of the "instrumental male" and "expressive female" indicate that men are expected to be assertive during an employment interview. Assertiveness is considered normative communication behavior for a male applicant and probably goes unnoticed unless he moves beyond the bounds of propriety. In contrast, assertiveness is not congruent with the "expressive female" stereotype. Thus, the stereotypic "instrumental male" may be granted greater latitude in the kind of information provided in the employment interview than the "expressive female."

Cecil, Paul, and Olins (1973) examined qualities perceived to be important for male and female applicants for the same job. Their findings indicated that the kinds of standards and criteria used to evaluate job applicants differs for male and female applicants. Arvey (1979; Arvey

& Campion, 1982) suggests that stereotypes may shape the expectations that interviewers have of applicants during an interview. "It may be that an interviewer, after learning that the person to be interviewed next is female, evaluates the candidate on a different set of criteria . . . than used for evaluating a male candidate" (Arvey, 1979, p. 744). Thus, job offers may be based on how well stereotypic gender characteristics match the qualities thought to be necessary for the particular job (Arvey, 1979).

Job applicants have at their disposal a number of ways to influence evaluations of communication competence. However, achieving effectiveness and appropriateness may be different for men and women. Men are encouraged and expected to be competitive. Therefore, being braggadocios may be perceived as acceptable behavior for the competitive man. Furthermore, the extra information provided by bragging may insure a competitive edge over other applicants. As Einhorn (1981) suggests, the extent to which applicants exploit their potential coincides almost completely with the outcome of the interviews. In contrast, women are not expected to be competitive and bragging is not a behavior associated with noncompetitiveness. Consequently, men may enjoy an advantage not readily available to women in that men can "exploit their potential" as candidates for employment through bragging.

In contrast, women may jeopardize their communication effectiveness and appropriateness by bragging. Rather than brag about their achievements, women are encouraged to be "other" focused. Thus, the female applicant may be ineffective because she does not reveal enough information about her achievements and qualifications, thereby supporting the stereotype of women being less qualified than men. On the other hand, if the female applicant does brag about her accomplishments, she may still be evaluated negatively because her communication is incongruent with her gender role.

Communication Competence and Bragging

Bragging is assumed to be socially undesirable in general (Miller et al., 1992). Therefore, one would not expect bragging behavior to be conducive to positive evaluations of communication competence. However, research indicates that bragging might actually contribute to positive evaluations of effectiveness and competence in social contexts.

Miller et al. (1992) had subjects read stories involving positive self-disclosure, negative self-disclosure, and bragging. Subjects then rated the disclosures on dimensions of competency, social sensitivity, and likability. Although the boastful speaker was perceived to be less socially sensitive than either the positive or negative self-discloser, there was no difference in

perceptions of the boastful speaker and the positive self-discloser in the extent to which they were perceived as competent. Similarly, Schlenker and Leary (1982) compared boastful and modest communicators. Subjects read stories containing communicators' prediction of a future performance and explanation of a past performance on an exam. Schlenker and Leary found that self-enhancing speakers made a more favorable overall impression and were rated as more competent and sincere when the audience did not know the speaker's actual performance on the exam.

Because boasts contain instrumental and competitive communication behaviors typically associated with males, Miller et al. (1992) extended their investigation of bragging to include sex of target and sex of rater. Findings indicated that females demonstrating positive self-disclosure were viewed more favorably than were males. However, females demonstrating boastful behaviors were viewed less positively than were boastful males. In addition, females were rated as more boastful than boastful males even though both exhibited the same boasting behavior. Those who boasted were perceived to be more competent and less feminine than positive self-disclosers by both male and female subjects. Miller et al. suggest that stereotypes about males and females may influence ratings of boastfulness and positive self-disclosure. Particularly, men stereotypically are less self-disclosive than are women.

That is, stereotypically, men are less likely to share personal ideas and feelings that are unknown to another person. Thus, men are likely to be evaluated less favorably when they self-disclose. On the other hand, men are likely to be considered more competent than women (Lott, 1985). Thus, men who brag are likely to be evaluated more favorably than women who brag.

Bragging conceivably contributes to positive evaluations of communication competence. Whether or not it does apparently depends on variables such as the level of bragging and gender of the braggart. Whether bragging is beneficial or adverse appears to depend on the goal of the communicator (Miller et al., 1992; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). If the goal is to be perceived as successful, boasting appears to be a potentially useful strategy, especially for men (Miller et al., 1992). However, boasting results in unfavorable evaluations for women. If the goal is to be likeable, an approach such as positive self-disclosure appears to be more fitting than bragging (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). However, positive self-disclosure results in less favorable evaluations for men. The dilemma for a job applicant is that he or she needs to appear to be both successful and likeable.

Summary

A number of perspectives purport to explain the nature of gender differences in social behavior. The physiological

perspective suggests that gender differences are the result of biologically inherent variables. The cultural or socialization perspective contends that boys and girls grow up in segregated subcultures in which they learn different ways of communicating. The gender-role perspective takes a structural approach, suggesting that gender differences are the result of different behaviors associated with one's position in a hierarchy, and is the perspective taken in this investigation.

Many observations of "sex differences" are based on sex stereotypes, which influence evaluations of men and women. Specifically, men are perceived as more competent than women when both perform the same task. In addition, men who succeed on a male-oriented task are judged to be skillful, while women who succeed on the same task are judged to be lucky. These divergent evaluations have implications for perceptions of the communication behaviors of men and women in task-related settings.

Communication skills have been identified as a priority in hiring decisions. In addition, communication competence has been implicated in the maintenance of occupational success once employed. Thus, communication competence can have consequences for one's economic status. However, if men and women performing the same behavior are evaluated differently, then what counts as communicatively competent behavior likely is not the same for men and women. For

example, men who brag are rated higher in competence than are women who perform the same bragging behavior. And, women who self-disclose are rated higher in likability than men who exhibit the same self-disclosure. Consequently, even though communication behavior is important in hiring decisions, men and women may need to demonstrate different behaviors in order to receive a favorable evaluation.

One of the things that applicants do in an employment interview is provide information about themselves to the interviewer. This information is intended to convince the interviewer that the applicant is the "best" person for the job. It is a situation in which an applicant should, and is expected to, reveal achievements, expertise, etc. Some bragging may be condoned in order to emphasize the significance of these achievements and expertise. Evidence is not available regarding how men and women who brag in an employment interview might be evaluated. Thus, the following research questions and hypotheses were posed:

H1: Evaluations of the communication competence of male and female applicants differ.

R1: Do evaluations of the communication competence of applicants differ on the basis of sex of respondent, level of bragging, and/or the interaction of these variables with each other and/or with sex of applicant?

H2: Evaluations of the communication effectiveness of male and female applicants differ.

R2: Do evaluations of the communication effectiveness of applicants differ on the basis of sex of respondent, level of bragging, and/or the interaction of these variables with each other and/or with sex of applicant?

H3: Evaluations of the communication appropriateness of male and female applicants differ.

R3: Do evaluations of the communication appropriateness of applicants differ on the basis of sex of respondent, level of bragging, and/or the interaction of these variables with each other and/or with sex of applicant?

H4: Evaluations of communication competence differ by level of bragging.

R4: Does probability of hiring differ on the basis of sex of respondent, sex of applicant, level of bragging and/or the interaction of these variables with each other?

R5: What are the relationships between probability of hiring and (a) communication competence, (b) communication effectiveness, and (c) communication appropriateness?

R6: What are the relationships among (a) communication competence, (b) communication effectiveness, (c)

communication appropriateness and (d) 10 characteristics of the successful job applicant?

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The present investigation examined the influence of gender on evaluations of communication competence in a task-related context. Specifically, the study examined the effects of the sex of respondent, sex of applicant, and level of bragging on respondents' evaluations of applicants' communication competence in the context of an initial employment interview.

Design

A 2 x 2 x 3 factorial design was used in the study. The independent variables were sex of respondent, sex of applicant, and three ordinal levels of bragging. Three prepared scenarios, with verbatim transcripts, representing "High" (HLB), "Moderate" (MLB) or "Low" (LLB) levels of bragging, each attributed to either a male or female job applicant, were treatment stimuli. The six scenarios (sex of applicant x level of bragging) were organized according to a random sequence prior to distribution to respondents. Subjects were assigned randomly to treatment groups. Each respondent received one interviewing scenario.

The internal validity of the experiment met criteria established by Campbell and Stanley (1963). Subjects were

not pretested. Thus, testing, history, maturation, and mortality effects did not confound the treatment. The selection of subjects was not based on extreme scores on any criterion measurement; therefore, statistical regression did not influence the results. Intra-session history and instrumentation were controlled by (a) administering all instructions, stimuli, and measurements to all subjects in written form, (b) administering all procedures during one class period, and (c) having all procedures administered by the same research confederate. As a result of these controls, the outcomes of this experiment should be attributable only to the experimental treatments.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in order to test the reliability of the communication competence scale to be used in the larger study and to determine if "high" and "low" levels of bragging would be perceived differently. A 2 x 2 factorial design, was used in the pilot study in which subjects read one of two verbatim transcripts developed for this study. The transcripts represented either "high" or "low" bragging and each was attributed to either a male or female job applicant. "High" bragging scenarios included six characteristics of bragging as identified by Miller et al. (1992). "Low" bragging did not include any of these characteristics. After reading the scenario, each subject

responded to the same initial communication competence scale intended for the larger study.

A manipulation check was included in the questionnaire to determine if the two levels of bragging, as differentiated in prior research (e.g., Miller et al., 1992), and as manipulated in the pilot study, actually were perceived differently. These perceptions were measured via a single question that read: "Steve (Susan) seemed to brag too much." Responses ranged from "0" ("Do not agree at all") to "10" ("Completely Agree").

Reliabilities for communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness were checked by computing Cronbach's alpha on the components of the total scale and separately for (a) items intended to measure communication effectiveness and (b) items intended to measure communication appropriateness. Respondents were 34 undergraduates enrolled in an Introduction to Public Speaking class who received class credit for their participation.

Results indicated that Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .95 for the complete communication competence scale, .93 for the appropriateness items, and .88 for the effectiveness items. A two-factor ANOVA revealed a main effect for level of bragging ($F = 5.92$, $df = 1,28$, $p < .02$), but not for sex of applicant. There was not a statistically significant interaction effect. A follow-up t-test revealed that "high"

bragging resulted in lower evaluations of communication competence (M = 6.27) than "low" bragging (M = 9.59). The difference was statistically significant (t = -2.19, df = 15.27, p < .04). In addition, results of a t-test indicated that respondents did discriminate between the two levels of bragging. The difference between the mean for "high" bragging (M = 9.38) and "low" bragging (M = 1.92) was statistically significant (t = 8.76, df = 14.41, p< .001).

Based on the results of the pilot study, two changes were made prior to conducting the larger study. First, because the difference between "low" and "high" levels of bragging was great (p< .001), it was felt that the "high" condition may be so offensive that persons performing this level of bragging, regardless of sex, would be evaluated less favorably than those in the "low" condition. Thus, a third and moderate level of bragging was included in the final investigation. Second, wording in the scenarios and test instrument was changed slightly in an attempt to make sex-of-applicant more salient. Work by Miller et al. (1992) suggests that men and women who brag equally are evaluated differently. However, no difference was found in the pilot study. One possible explanation is that gender of the applicant was not made salient in the scenarios and test instrument. Thus, items in the communication competence scale such as "It was a rewarding conversation" were changed to read "It was a rewarding conversation for Steve (Susan)."

In addition, phrases such as "Steve (Susan) paused briefly" were added to the scenarios.

Operational Definitions

Independent Variables

Sex of respondent. Respondents indicated their biological sex on the questionnaire.

Sex of applicant. Although last names of the applicants was consistent across conditions, the sex of applicant was established by manipulating first names and incorporating the pronouns "she" or "he" and "his" or "her" in the job interview scenarios. Female applicants were identified as Susan Carson. Male applicants were identified as Steve Carson. All other elements of the treatments were identical.

Bragging. Three employment interview scenarios provided the basis for varying the level of bragging. "High" (HLB), "Moderate" (MLB), and "Low" (LLB) levels of bragging were used. Based on the work of Cooke and Miller (cited in Miller et al., 1992) and confirmed by Miller et al. (1992), bragging (as opposed to positive self-disclosure) was characterized by (a) use of superlatives (e.g., "best" versus "good"), (b) references to performing better than one's peers on tasks, (c) less surprise at being rewarded versus being honored or grateful, (d) less emphasis on hard work and more emphasis on being a "wonderful" person, (e) less emphasis on helping the group (e.g., more

references to "I" than "we"), or (f) a sense of deserving one's reward. In this study, HLB included at least one instance of each of the bragging characteristics outlined by Miller et al. MLB bragging included at least one instance of three of the characteristics of bragging. Specifically, (a) use of superlatives, (b) references to performing better than one's peers on tasks, and (c) a sense of deserving one's reward. These three characteristics were selected randomly from the six characteristics noted above. The LLB condition did not contain any of the six characteristics listed above. Instead, the LLB condition included parallel positive self-disclosures that "mirror" the bragging self-disclosures. For example, rather than "less emphasis on hard work" as in the HLB condition, the LLB condition indicated more emphasis on hard work. See Appendices A, B, and C for the texts of the HLB, MLB, and LLB scenarios, respectively.

Dependent Variables

Probability of hiring. Probability of hiring was operationalized as the respondents' recommendation for hiring the job applicant depicted in the interview scenario. Subjects responded to a single questionnaire item, indicating on a scale from 0-100%, the probability of recommending to a supervisor that the applicant be hired.

Communication competence. Communication competence was operationalized as the score on an "other-reference" adapted

communication competence scale. That is, subjects evaluated the communication competence of another person as opposed to evaluating their own communication competence.

The initial communication competence scale for this study was developed from items on the Conversational Effectiveness Scale (CES) and the Conversational Appropriateness Scale (CAS) developed by Spitzberg and Canary (1985). The CES and CAS were designed to measure perceptions of appropriateness and effectiveness in a single conversational episode (Spitzberg, 1993). Sometimes the scales are used separately and sometimes they are used together as a single scale (cf. Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Spitzberg, 1993; Spitzberg & Canary, 1985).

The original CES and the CAS questionnaires each consist of 20 Likert-type items. Of the 20 items on the CES, 10 are positively worded and 10 are negatively worded. Of the 20 items on the CAS, 8 are positively worded and 12 are negatively worded. The possible range of scores on each of the original scales is from 20 to 100. When the scales are combined, the possible range of scores is from 40 to 200. A high score indicates high communication competence.

The CES and CAS have been reworded in both self-reference and other-reference formats (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). "Self-reference" formats refer to evaluations of one's own communication competence. "Other-reference" formats refer to evaluations of another's communication

competence. In addition, the measures have been adapted to hypothetical conversations such as those presented in this study. Reliability typically has been in the .80s (Spitzberg, 1993). According to Spitzberg (1993), the CES and CAS have "displayed highly sensible validity coefficients" (p. 4) with other measures of communication competence as well as measures of conflict strategies, communication satisfaction, trust, and mutuality of control.

In this study, selected items from the CES and CAS formed an initial communication competence scale. However, the final items used in analyses were based on the results of factor analysis. Thus, it was the adapted scale resulting from factor analysis, not the initial scale, that provided a score for overall communication competence. Overall communication competence was computed by (a) dividing the score for each factor by the number of items in the factor and then (b) adding the scores of the four factors. See Appendix D for the initial communication competence scale.

Communication effectiveness. Communication effectiveness was operationalized as the score on items loading on the effectiveness factors of the communication competence scale. Items referring to communication effectiveness were taken from the CES. Items on the CES refer to one's personal success, control, and goal achievement in a conversation, but were reworded in this

study to reflect an assessment of "other" in the conversation. For example, "I was an ineffective conversationalist" was revised to read "Susan (Steve) was an ineffective conversationalist." Seven items on the CES refer to control in the conversation. For example, "The other person was more active in the conversation than I was." These seven items were deleted because they could not be reworded to reflect "other-reference" without jeopardizing the integrity of the question. The remaining 13 items on the CES were included in the initial communication competence scale as an effectiveness subscale. However, only those items that met the criteria for factor loading were used in the analysis of data.

Communication appropriateness. Communication appropriateness was operationalized as the score on items loading on the appropriateness factors of the communication competence scale. Items referring to communication appropriateness were taken from the CAS. Items on the CAS refer to the other person (e.g., "Some of her/his remarks were simply improper."). Rather than use "her/his," as indicated on the original scale, items were worded to reflect "her" or "his," and in some cases "Steve" or "Susan," as appropriate for the particular job applicant. One item on the CAS refers to interruptions and was deleted from this study. The remaining 19 items on the CAS were included in the initial communication competence scale as an

appropriateness subscale. However, only those items that met the criteria for factor loading were used in the analysis of data.

Initial Communication Competence Scale

The initial communication competence measure used in this study consisted of 32 items, 13 items from the CES and 19 items from the CAS. These 32 items were ordered randomly to produce an initial scale for evaluating communication competence. However, the final communication competence scale and subscales used in analyses were established by factor analysis.

The CES and CAS use a traditional Likert-type format for responding to items. However, some scholars suggest 0-100 scaling over more traditional 5 or 7 point Likert-type scales (e.g., McCroskey, 1992). McCroskey contends that the 0-100 probability response format,

> allows the respondent to use a response system common to most individuals from elementary school on. It is used, for example, as the measure of success in many instructional systems and commonly used to indicate weather patterns in news reports. Simply put, it is an estimation system commonly understood by lay people. (p. 21)

The 0-100 scales offer a number of advantages. Specifically, they allow for considerable variance and therefore are suited to measures of process such as the process of communication. Furthermore, they are capable of fine discriminations among stimuli. As a result, such scaling tends to yield more highly reliable findings

(Barnett, Hamlin, & Danowski, 1982). Therefore, a 0-100 scaling format was used for this study.

Subjects

A convenience sample was used in this study. Respondents were 442 undergraduates enrolled in a basic Theatre Appreciation course. The experiment was conducted during a regularly scheduled class time. Respondents received extra credit for participation.

Procedures

Subjects were asked to assume the role of interviewer when reading the scenarios. Each subject was asked to read one interview scenario and then evaluate the job applicant by responding to the communication competence scale. The use of college students as "interviewers" has received research attention. A number of investigations indicate no significant differences between professional interviewers and college students with respect to main effects (cf. Bernstein, Hakel, & Harlan, 1975; Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wibach, 1975; McGovern, Jones, & Morris, 1979). Thus, Arvey and Campion (1982) conclude that the use of college students as interviewers produces minimal threat to generalizability.

Respondents were asked to indicate the probability that they would recommend hiring Susan (Steve) and were also asked to rate ten qualities of job applicants in terms of the importance of each to a successful job interview. Basic demographic information (sex, age, year in school) also was

requested of each respondent. For the question relating to probability of hiring, characteristics of a successful job applicant, and questions regarding demographic information, see Appendices D, E, and F respectively.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-X). Alpha was set at .05 for all tests. General analyses included descriptive statistics and scale development procedures. Specifically, factor analysis was used to establish the factor structure of the adapted communication competence scale. A principal components factor analysis with orthogonal varimax rotation was performed. Criteria for item selection was (a) a .6 primary loading with a .4 maximum secondary loading, (b) an eigenvalue of no less than 1.0, and (c) at least two items for each factor (Harman, 1968). In addition, scale development included reliability analyses for the adapted communication competence scale and the effectiveness and appropriateness subscales. Later, descriptive data relating to respondents' perceptions of important interviewee qualities were also reported.

Research questions one through four were answered via a series of three-factor ANOVAs to test for the effects of sex of respondent, sex of applicant, and level of bragging on evaluations of communication competence, communication effectiveness, communication appropriateness, and

probability of hiring. Where there were statistically significant F values, appropriate follow-up tests were conducted using the Behrens-Fisher t-test. The Behrens-Fisher t-test is robust to violations of homogeneity of variance and offers a conservative test where a large number of tests are conducted (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975).

Pearson product-moment correlations were used to answer research question five, which addressed the possible relationships among probability of hiring, communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness. Likewise, Pearson product-moment correlations were used to answer research question six, which addressed the relationships among 10 characteristics of the successful job applicant, communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness.

Hypotheses one through three were tested via a series of a priori contrasts specifying LSD (least-significant difference) ranges for comparisons of male and female applicants. Hypothesis four was tested via a priori contrasts specifying LSD (least-significant difference) ranges for comparisons of all possible pairs of level of bragging. Results of all statistical analyses will be reported in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

To investigate the influence of gender and bragging on evaluations of communication competence, communication effectiveness, communication appropriateness, and probability of hiring, data were analyzed for 422 cases. A 2 x 2 x 3 factorial design was used to test four hypotheses and answer six research questions. A description of the sample, results of scale development and reliability analyses, descriptive statistics, results of statistical analyses, and follow-up tests are reported in the sections that follow.

Sample Characteristics

A convenience sample of 442 undergraduate students enrolled in a Theatre Appreciation course at a large southeastern university participated in this study. Twenty sets of responses were eliminated due to gross incompletions. Of the remaining 422 participants, 222 (52.6%) were female and 200 (47.4%) were male. Ages ranged from 17 to 43 years with the mean age being 19 years. There were 239 (56.6%) first year students, 108 (25.6%) sophomores, 33 (7.8%) juniors, and 22 (5.2%) seniors, reflecting the lower-division course used for the study.

Twenty respondents (4.7%) failed to identify their year in school.

Manipulation Check

To determine if the three levels of bragging as manipulated in the study actually were perceived to be different, and in the direction presumed by the manipulation treatments, respondents were asked the following question: "How much did Steve (Susan), the interviewee in the scenario, brag?" A nine-point scale was used where responses ranged from "0" ("Low") to "9" ("High"). A priori contrasts specifying LSD (least-significant difference) ranges were used for comparisons of all possible pairs of level of bragging. Level of bragging manipulated (low, moderate, high) was the independent variable and perceived bragging rate was the dependent variable in these tests.

Differences among the three levels of bragging were statistically significant. Specifically, the mean for low level bragging (LLB) ($M = 4.70$) was lower than the mean for moderate level bragging (MLB) ($M = 6.66$) ($t = 7.16$, $df = 228$, $p < .001$) and high level bragging (HLB) ($M = 8.25$) ($t = 14.89$, $df = 160$, $p < .001$). In addition, the mean for MLB ($M = 6.66$) was lower than that for HLB (8.25) ($t = 8.42$, $df = 220$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that respondents perceived the three levels to be distinctly different from one another. See Appendix F for the manipulation check as it appeared in the communication competence scale.

Scale Development

Factor Analysis

Items on the Conversational Effectiveness Scale (CES) and Conversational Appropriateness Scale (CAS) had been reworded and applied to a written hypothetical scenario in this study. Therefore, factor analysis was appropriate in order to determine if the two-factor structure of the original scales remained stable with these changes. In addition, factor analysis by Canary and Spitzberg (1987) revealed three independent factors (which they labeled effectiveness, general appropriateness, and specific appropriateness) rather than two when they used the 40 questions from the CES and CAS. Thus, a principal components factor analysis with Kaiser varimax rotation was performed to determine the factor structure of the adapted instrument in the present investigation. Table 1 details the results of the factor analysis.

The CES and CAS used in this study for development of an adapted communication competence scale, ostensibly measure two factors. Specifically, items on the CES are purported to measure conversational effectiveness while items on the CAS measure conversational appropriateness.

Four factors emerged from the principal components factor analysis instead of only two factors of communication effectiveness and communication appropriateness. The four factors were labeled Conversational Appropriateness (CA),

Table 1

Factor Analysis of Appropriateness and Effectiveness Measures (Principal Components with Kaiser Varimax Rotation)

	Factor 1	2	3	4
1. a useless conversation	.07	.19	.03	.69
2. remarks unsuitable	.66	.20	.10	.32
3. everything said appropriate	.61	.35	-.05	.15
4. smooth conversationalist	.41	.50	-.11	.23
5. conversation was unprofitable	.28	.18	.04	.73
6. applicant was effective	.42	.55	-.03	.26
7. conversation was unrewarding	.18	.19	.15	.74
8. did not violate expectations	.51	.33	.21	.07
9. applicant achieved goals	.23	.60	-.09	.10
10. made me feel uncomfortable	.40	-.04	.61	.12
11. ineffective conversationalist	.36	.24	.15	.49
12. conversation was beneficial	.37	.59	.11	.39
13. I was comfortable throughout	.36	.34	.54	.13
14. said incorrect things	.78	.17	.25	.21
15. things should not be said	.70	.11	.24	.22
16. spoke in good taste	.53	.28	.44	.10
17. things seemed out of place	.63	.28	.12	.25
18. remarks simply improper	.75	.12	.35	.16
19. conversation was suitable	.37	.60	.18	.22
20. conversation was unsuccessful	.31	.37	.26	.56
21. I was embarrassed by remarks	.13	-.02	.72	.27
22. went how applicant wanted	-.10	.68	.12	.05
23. not embarrassing to me	.03	.19	.75	-.07
24. one remark was rude	.39	.02	.65	.06
25. remarks were inappropriate	.77	.09	.37	.15
26. an advantageous conversation	.19	.66	.07	.34
27. a rewarding conversation	.24	.70	.14	.36
28. communication was proper	.43	.59	.19	.00
29. things said in bad taste	.58	.09	.55	.14
30. got what he/she wanted	.01	.81	.10	.05
31. things said were awkward	.63	.14	.16	.11
32. useful and helpful	.23	.68	.16	.34

Note: Underlined items meet criteria for factor selection.

Conversational Effectiveness (CE), Relational Appropriateness (RA), and Conversational Ineffectiveness (CI). Total variance accounted for by the four factors was

58.40%. Individually, the factors CA, CE, RA, and CI accounted for 39.3%, 9.7%, 5.0%, and 4.4% of the total variance, respectively.

Of the 13 items intended to measure communication effectiveness on the initial scale, nine items met the criteria for factor selection. Of the 19 items intended to measure communication appropriateness on the initial scale, 13 items met the criteria for factor selection.

The first factor was labeled Conversational Appropriateness (CA). The eight items comprising this factor generally assess the suitability of the speaker's remarks to a particular conversational situation (e.g., "Some of his/her remarks were simply improper"). The mean inter-item correlation for CA was .54.

The second factor was labeled Conversational Effectiveness (CE). CE is comprised of six items (mean inter-item correlation .52) that evaluate whether or not the speaker accomplished his or her goal in a particular interaction (e.g., "It was a rewarding conversation for Steve/Susan").

The third factor, labeled Relational Appropriateness (RA), consisted of four items. RA is most apparent in items that relate to feelings aroused in the "receiver" by the speaker's remarks (e.g., "I was embarrassed at times by his/her remarks") (mean inter-item correlation .46).

The fourth factor, comprised of three items, was labeled Conversational Ineffectiveness (CI). CI is identified by items which evaluate the level of ineffectiveness of the conversation for the speaker (e.g., "The conversation was unprofitable for Steve/Susan"). The mean inter-item correlation for CI was .48.

The final items were for CA: 2, 3, 14, 15, 17, 18, 25, and 31; for CE: 9, 19, 22, 26, 27, 30, and 32; for RA: 10, 21, 23, and 24; for CI: 1, 5, and 7. Table 2 details items sorted by factor.

Table 2

Sorted Factor Analysis of Appropriateness and Effectiveness

	Factor Loading	Item Corr.
Factor 1 (Conversational Appropriateness)		
2. The WAY he/she said some of his/her remarks was unsuitable.	.66	.68
3. Everything he/she said was appropriate.	.61	.58
14. He/she said some things that were simply the incorrect things to say.	.74	.78
15. He/she said some things that should not have been said.	.70	.72
17. He/she said several things that seemed out of place in the conversation.	.63	.68
18. Some of his/her remarks were simply improper.	.75	.78
25. Some of his/her remarks were inappropriate.	.77	.78
31. Some of the things he/she said were awkward.	.63	.61

Table 2--Continued

	Factor Loading	Item Corr.
Factor 2 (Conversational Effectiveness)		
9. Steve/Susan achieved everything he hoped to achieve in the conversation.	.60	.50
19. His/her conversation was very suitable to the situation.	.60	.65
22. The conversation went pretty much the way Steve/Susan wanted.	.68	.51
26. It was an advantageous conversation for Steve/Susan.	.66	.71
27. It was a rewarding conversation for Steve/Susan.	.70	.78
30. Steve/Susan got what he/she wanted out of the conversation.	.81	.63
32. The conversation was very useful and helpful for Steve/Susan.	.68	.75
Factor 3 (Relational Appropriateness)		
10. Occasionally, his/her statements made me feel uncomfortable.	.61	.58
21. I was embarrassed at times by his/her remarks.	.72	.60
23. None of his/her remarks were embarrassing to me.	.75	.53
24. At least one of his/her remarks was rude.	.65	.58
Factor 4 (Conversational Ineffectiveness)		
1. It was a useless conversation for Steve/Susan.	.69	.52
5. The conversation was unprofitable for Steve/Susan.	.73	.59
7. The conversation was very unrewarding for Steve/Susan.	.74	.59

Correlations Among Factors

Pearson correlations among overall communication competence and the four subfactors (CA, CE, RA, and CI) were all positive and statistically significant. Table 3 reports these correlations.

Table 3

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations among Conversation Appropriateness, Relational Appropriateness, Conversational Effectiveness, Conversational Ineffectiveness, and Communication Competence

	CA	RA	CE	CI	ComComp
CA	--	.58	.52	.51	.85
RA		--	.28	.29	.72
CE			--	.54	.72
CI				--	.74

Note: All correlations significant at $p < .001$.
Range for n is 410 - 418.

Reliability

Only those items which met the criteria for factor selection were used in conducting reliability analyses for the adapted communication competence scale and the four subscales. The final Cronbach's coefficient alphas for the subscales based on the four factors were .91 for CA, .86 for CE, .77 for RA, and .73 for CI. Coefficient alpha for the adapted communication competence scale was .91.

Descriptive Statistics

Tables 4 through 9 summarize the descriptive statistics for the 12 cells of each dependent variable. The dependent variables include communication competence, CE, CI, CA, RA, and probability of hiring.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Gender Differences in Communication Competence

Hypothesis one predicted: "Evaluations of the overall communication competence of male and female applicants differ." An a priori contrast specifying the LSD (least-significant difference) range was used to compare male and female applicants. Although male applicants were rated higher in overall communication competence ($M = 19.51$) than female applicants ($M = 18.83$), the difference was not statistically significant ($t = -.85$, $df = 403$, $p < .40$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Research question one asked: "Do evaluations of the overall communication competence of applicants differ on the basis of sex of respondent, level of bragging, and/or the interaction of these variables with each other and/or with sex of applicant?" A three-factor ANOVA revealed a main effect for level of bragging only ($F = 38.03$, $df = 2,393$, $p < .001$) with no significant interaction effects. Table 10 details the results of the analysis of variance.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Communication Competence

Level of Bragging	Sex of Applicant	Sex of Respondent	Mean	S.D.	n
Low	Male	Male	24.32	6.37	29
		Female	20.69	7.67	32
	Female	Male	21.87	7.72	31
		Female	22.98	8.97	35
Moderate	Male	Male	20.93	7.38	34
		Female	21.97	7.73	34
	Female	Male	21.04	7.75	35
		Female	18.24	8.13	36
High	Male	Male	15.18	7.41	33
		Female	15.16	6.92	38
	Female	Male	14.78	6.84	31
		Female	14.20	6.22	37
Total for Applicants		Male	19.51	7.95	200
		Female	18.83	8.30	205
Total for Respondents		Male	19.64	7.98	193
		Female	18.73	8.25	212
Total for Sample			19.17	8.13	405

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Conversational Effectiveness

Level of Bragging	Sex of Applicant	Sex of Respondent	Mean	S.D.	n
Low	Male	Male	5.20	1.72	29
		Female	3.62	2.50	32
	Female	Male	4.66	2.15	31
		Female	4.57	2.40	35
Moderate	Male	Male	4.97	2.18	35
		Female	5.26	2.17	36
	Female	Male	4.94	2.11	36
		Female	4.21	2.48	36
High	Male	Male	3.64	2.48	34
		Female	3.68	2.27	38
	Female	Male	3.97	2.15	32
		Female	3.91	2.11	37
Total for Applicants		Male	4.38	2.34	204
		Female	4.37	2.24	207
Total for Respondents		Male	4.56	2.20	197
		Female	4.21	2.36	214
Total for Sample			4.38	2.29	411

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Conversational Ineffectiveness

Level of Bragging	Sex of Applicant	Sex of Respondent	Mean	S.D.	n
Low	Male	Male	6.23	2.62	29
		Female	5.19	2.71	34
	Female	Male	5.20	3.14	32
		Female	6.01	2.78	35
Moderate	Male	Male	5.75	2.32	34
		Female	6.28	3.05	37
	Female	Male	5.71	2.50	37
		Female	5.70	2.66	38
High	Male	Male	4.83	2.39	33
		Female	4.75	2.30	39
	Female	Male	4.43	2.52	33
		Female	4.83	2.34	37
Total for Applicants		Male	5.48	2.62	206
		Female	5.33	2.68	212
Total for Respondents		Male	5.35	2.62	198
		Female	5.45	2.68	220
Total for Sample			5.41	2.65	418

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Conversational Appropriateness

Level of Bragging	Sex of Applicant	Sex of Respondent	Mean	S.D.	n
Low	Male	Male	5.35	2.24	29
		Female	4.35	2.70	34
	Female	Male	4.77	2.49	32
		Female	4.84	2.98	35
Moderate	Male	Male	4.03	2.65	35
		Female	3.93	2.79	37
	Female	Male	4.01	2.65	36
		Female	3.38	2.87	38
High	Male	Male	2.29	2.49	34
		Female	2.45	2.01	38
	Female	Male	2.34	2.21	32
		Female	2.02	1.86	37
Total for Applicants		Male	3.67	2.68	207
		Female	3.54	2.74	210
Total for Respondents		Male	3.77	2.68	198
		Female	3.46	2.73	219
Total for Sample			3.61	2.71	417

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Relational Appropriateness

Level of Bragging	Sex of Applicant	Sex of Respondent	Mean	S.D.	n
Low	Male	Male	7.52	1.76	29
		Female	7.53	2.12	33
	Female	Male	7.30	2.58	32
		Female	7.56	2.41	35
Moderate	Male	Male	6.01	2.54	35
		Female	5.73	2.88	36
	Female	Male	6.24	2.90	35
		Female	5.64	3.30	39
High	Male	Male	4.13	2.84	34
		Female	4.33	2.69	38
	Female	Male	3.81	2.95	33
		Female	3.43	2.34	37
Total for Applicants		Male	5.80	2.83	205
		Female	5.64	3.16	211
Total for Respondents		Male	5.79	2.97	198
		Female	5.65	3.04	218
Total for Sample			5.72	3.00	416

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Probability of Hiring

Level of Bragging	Sex of Applicant	Sex of Respondent	Mean	S.D.	n
Low	Male	Male	54.00	25.18	27
		Female	46.39	26.89	28
	Female	Male	56.68	32.89	29
		Female	53.27	24.69	33
Moderate	Male	Male	54.78	25.34	33
		Female	47.00	27.31	33
	Female	Male	60.91	24.27	34
		Female	49.24	28.99	33
High	Male	Male	41.00	30.15	32
		Female	39.76	24.52	34
	Female	Male	39.50	27.44	32
		Female	37.02	23.72	35
Total for Applicants		Male	46.95	26.91	187
		Female	49.27	28.07	196
Total for Respondents		Male	51.10	28.47	187
		Female	45.31	26.31	196
Total for Sample			48.14	27.50	383

Table 10

Analysis of Variance for Communication Competence

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Sex of Applicant (SA)	72.65	1	72.65	1.30
Level of Bragging (B)	4245.22	2	2122.61	38.03*
Sex of Respondent (SR)	62.04	1	62.04	1.11
SA x B	60.18	2	30.09	.54
SA x SR	.02	1	.02	.01
B x SR	13.81	2	6.91	.12
SA x B x SR	306.85	2	153.43	2.75
Error	21936.51	393	55.82	

*p< .001

Follow-up t-tests indicated that the differences among all three levels of bragging were statistically significant. Evaluations of communication competence were higher for low level bragging (LLB) (M = 22.44) than for both moderate level bragging (MLB) (M = 20.52) and high level bragging (HLB) (M = 14.82). In addition, MLB resulted in higher evaluations of communication competence (M = 20.52) than did HLB (M = 14.82). The specific differences among levels of bragging as related to evaluations of overall communication competence are reported in the results of the tests for Hypothesis 4.

Gender Differences in Communication Effectiveness

Hypothesis two predicted: "Evaluations of the communication effectiveness of male and female applicants differ." An a priori contrast specifying the LSD (least-significant difference) range was used to compare male and

female applicants. Male applicants were rated slightly higher in Conversational Effectiveness (CE) (M = 4.38) than were female applicants (M = 4.37) (t = -.01, df = 407, p< .98). Male applicants were also rated slightly higher in Conversational Ineffectiveness (CI) (M = 5.48) than female applicants (M = 5.33) (t = -.60, df = 416, p< .55). These differences were not statistically significant. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Research question two asked: "Do evaluations of the communication effectiveness of applicants differ on the basis of sex of respondent, level of bragging, and/or the interaction of these variables with each other and/or with sex of applicant?" For Conversational Effectiveness (CE), a three-factor ANOVA revealed a main effect for level of bragging only (F = 7.85, df = 2,309, p< .001). There were no significant interaction effects. Table 11 details the results of the analysis of variance.

Follow-up t-tests indicated that the mean difference between low level bragging (LLB) (M = 4.49) and high level bragging (HLB) (M = 3.80) was statistically significant for CE. Specifically, LLB resulted in higher evaluations of CE (M = 4.49) than did HLB (M = 3.80). In addition, the difference in means for moderate level bragging (MLB) (M = 4.84) and HLB (M = 3.80) was statistically significant. However, the difference between means for LLB (M = 4.49) and

Table 11

Analysis of Variance for Conversational Effectiveness

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Sex of Applicant (SA)	.03	1	.03	.01
Level of Bragging (B)	79.06	2	39.52	7.85*
Sex of Respondent (SR)	11.13	1	11.13	2.21
SA x B	14.97	2	7.48	1.48
SA x SR	.10	1	.10	.02
B x SR	11.05	2	5.52	1.09
SA x B x SR	26.81	2	13.41	2.66
Error	2149.91	401	5.36	

*p< .001

MLB (M = 4.84) was not statistically significant. Table 12 details the effect of level of bragging on evaluations of CE.

Table 12

Effect of Level of Bragging on Conversational Effectiveness

Level of Bragging	M	t	df	p
LLB	4.49	-1.27	263	.20
MLB	4.84			
LLB	4.49	2.52	262	.012
HLB	3.80			
MLB	4.84	3.93	282	.001
HLB	3.80			

For Conversational Ineffectiveness (CI), a three-factor ANOVA revealed a main effect for level of bragging only ($F = 7.75$, $df = 2,406$, $p < .001$). There were no significant interaction effects. Table 13 details the results of the analysis of variance.

Table 13

Analysis of Variance for Conversational Ineffectiveness

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Sex of Applicant (SA)	3.16	1	3.16	.46
Level of Bragging (B)	106.61	2	53.30	7.75*
Sex of Respondent (SR)	1.33	1	1.33	.19
SA x B	1.18	2	.59	.09
SA x SR	7.63	1	7.63	1.11
B x SR	2.17	2	1.08	.16
SA x B x SR	24.63	2	12.31	1.79
Error	2792.43	406	6.87	

*$p < .001$

Follow-up t-tests indicated that the mean difference between LLB and HLB was statistically significant for CI. Specifically, LLB resulted in higher evaluations of CI ($M = 5.65$) than did HLB ($M = 4.71$). In addition, the difference in means for MLB ($M = 5.86$) and HLB ($M = 4.71$) was statistically significant. However, the difference between means for LLB ($M = 5.65$) and MLB ($M = 5.86$) was not statistically significant. Table 14 details the effects of level of bragging on evaluations of CI.

Table 14

Effect of Level of Bragging on Conversational Ineffectiveness

Level of Bragging	M	t	df	p
LLB	5.65	-.65	264	.514
MLB	5.86			
LLB	5.65	2.93	252	.004
HLB	4.71			
MLB	5.86	3.88	284	.001
HLB	4.71			

Gender Differences in Communication Appropriateness

Hypothesis three predicted: "Evaluations of the communication appropriateness of male and female applicants differ." An a priori contrast specifying the LSD (least-significant difference) range was used to compare male and female applicants. Male applicants were rated slightly higher in CA (M = 3.67) than female applicants (M = 3.54). However, this difference was not statistically significant (t = -.49, df = 415, p< .62). For RA, male applicants were again rated higher (M = 5.80) than female applicants (M = 5.64). The difference was not statistically significant (t = -.55, df = 411, p< .58). Hypothesis 3 failed to receive statistical support.

Research question three asked: "Do evaluations of the communication appropriateness of applicants differ on the basis of sex of respondent, level of bragging, and/or the

interaction of these variables with each other and/or with sex of applicant?" For Conversational Appropriateness (CA), a three-factor ANOVA revealed a main effect for level of bragging only ($F = 35.01$, $df = 2,405$, $p < .001$). There were no significant interaction effects. See Table 15.

Table 15

Analysis of Variance for Conversational Appropriateness

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Sex of Applicant (SA)	3.21	1	3.21	.48
Level of Bragging (B)	446.87	2	223.43	35.01*
Sex of Respondent (SR)	9.08	1	9.08	1.42
SA x B	1.33	2	.66	.10
SA x SR	.01	1	.01	.00
B x SR	2.58	2	1.29	.20
SA x B x SR	13.66	2	6.83	1.07
Error	2584.29	405	6.38	

*$p < .001$

Follow-up t-tests indicated that the mean differences among all three levels of bragging were statistically significant for CA. Specifically, LLB resulted in higher evaluations of CA ($M = 4.81$) than did MLB ($M = 3.83$). LLB also resulted in higher evaluations of CA ($M = 4.81$) than did HLB ($M = 2.27$). In each case, the difference was statistically significant. In addition, the difference in means for MLB ($M = 3.83$) and HLB ($M = 2.27$) was statistically significant. Table 16 details the effects of

levels of bragging on evaluations of conversational appropriateness.

Table 16

Effect of Level of Bragging on Conversational Appropriateness

Level of Bragging	M	t	df	p
LLB	4.81	3.02	272	.003
MLB	3.83			
LLB	4.81	8.67	248	.001
HLB	2.27			
MLB	3.83	5.40	272	.001
HLB	2.27			

For Relational Appropriateness (RA), a three-factor ANOVA revealed a main effect for level of bragging ($F = 60.84$, $df = 2,404$, $p < .001$). There were no significant interaction effects. Table 17 details the results of the analysis of variance.

Follow-up t-tests indicated that the mean differences among all three levels of bragging were statistically significant for RA. Specifically, LLB resulted in higher evaluations of RA ($M = 7.48$) than did MLB ($M = 5.90$). LLB also resulted in higher evaluations of RA ($M = 7.48$) than did HLB ($M = 3.93$). In addition, the difference between means for MLB ($M = 5.90$) and HLB ($M = 3.93$) was

Table 17

Analysis of Variance for Relational Appropriateness

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Sex of Applicant (SA)	5.19	1	5.19	.73
Level of Bragging (B)	861.93	2	430.96	60.84*
Sex of Respondent (SR)	2.03	1	2.03	.29
SA x B	9.29	2	4.64	.66
SA x SR	1.35	1	1.35	.19
B x SR	5.96	2	2.98	.42
SA x B x SR	3.02	2	1.51	.21
Error	2861.48	407	7.08	

*p< .001

statistically significant. Table 18 details the effects of levels of bragging on evaluations of relational appropriateness.

Table 18

Effect of Level of Bragging on Relational Appropriateness

Level of Bragging	M	t	df	p
LLB	7.48	5.06	266	.001
MLB	5.90			
LLB	7.48	11.83	266	.001
HLB	3.93			
MLB	5.90	5.95	284	.001
HLB	3.93			

Bragging and Communication Competence

Hypothesis four predicted: "Evaluations of communication competence differ by level of bragging." A priori contrasts specifying LSD (least-significant difference) ranges were used for comparisons of all possible pairs of levels of bragging. LLB resulted in higher evaluations of communication competence (M = 22.44) than did MLB (M = 20.52). This difference was statistically significant. LLB also resulted in higher evaluations of communication competence (M = 22.44) than did HLB (M = 14.82). The difference was also statistically significant. In addition, the difference in means for MLB (M = 20.52) and HLB (M =14.82) was statistically significant. Thus, Hypothesis 4 received statistical support. Table 19 details the results of testing Hypothesis 4.

Table 19

Effect of Level of Bragging on Evaluations of Communication Competence

Level of Bragging	Mean	t	df	p
LLB	22.44	-2.10	402	.04
MLB	20.52			
LLB	22.44	-8.31	402	.001
HLB	14.82			
MLB	20.52	-6.35	402	.001
HLB	14.82			

Gender Differences in Probability of Hiring

Research question four asked: "Does probability of hiring differ on the basis of sex of respondent, sex of applicant, level of bragging and/or the interaction of these variables with each other?" Based on a scale of 0-100%, respondents were asked to indicate "the probability that you would recommend hiring Steve (Susan)?" (See Appendix D for the question as it appeared in the communication competence scale.)

Results of a three-factor ANOVA revealed a main effect for level of bragging and sex of respondent. There were no significant interaction effects. See Table 20.

Table 20

Analysis of Variance for Probability of Hiring

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Sex of Applicant (SA)	471.60	1	471.60	.66
Level of Bragging (B)	15799.55	2	7899.77	10.97**
Sex of Respondent (SR)	3079.76	1	3079.76	4.27*
SA x B	965.18	2	482.59	.67
SA x SR	6.08	1	6.08	.01
B x SR	1036.53	2	518.26	.72
SA x B x SR	259.47	2	129.73	.18
Error	267132.83	371	720.03	

**p< .001
*p< .05

Follow-up *t*-tests indicated that for the effect of sex of respondent on probability of hiring, male respondents were more likely to recommend hiring (M = 51.10) than were female respondents (M = 45.31) (*t* = 2.07, *df* = 375, *p*< .039).

Follow-up *t*-tests for the effect of bragging on probability of hiring indicated that the means for LLB (M = 52.64) and MLB (M = 53.04) (*t* = -.12, *df* = 242, *p*< .907) did not differ. However the mean difference between probability of hiring for LLB (M = 52.64) and HLB (M = 39.27) was statistically significant (*t* = 3.92, *df* 240, *p*< .001), as was the difference between MLB (M = 53.04) and HLB (M = 39.27) (*t* = 4.24, *df* = 263, *p*< .001).

Probability of Hiring, Communication Competence, Communication Effectiveness, and Communication Appropriateness

Research question five asked: "What are the relationships between probability of hiring and (a) communication competence, (b) communication effectiveness, and (c) communication appropriateness?" The relationships between probability of hiring and communication competence, CE, CI, CA, and RA were all positive and statistically significant. Probability of hiring correlated with communication competence at .64; CE at .63; CI at .50; CA at .57; and, RA at .34. All correlations were significant at *p*< .001.

Communication Competence and Characteristics of the Successful Job Applicant

Research question six asked: What are the relationships among (a) communication competence, (b) communication effectiveness, (c) communication appropriateness and (d) 10 characteristics of the successful job applicant? The relationships between four of the "characteristics" and communication competence, CE, CI, CA, and RA were positive and statistically significant. Specifically, Extra Curricular Activities correlated with CE; GPA correlated with CI; Communication Skills correlated with CA; and Honors correlated with communication competence, CE, and CI. All significant correlations were in a positive direction. Table 21 presents a matrix of these correlations.

Post Hoc Analysis

A post hoc analysis was performed to determine the possible influence of respondents' view of the importance of communication skill in an employment interview on their evaluations of communication competence. Based on a median split for the score for "importance of communication skill," two groups ("high" and "low") were formed. The "high" group consisted of respondents who rated "importance of communication skill" greater than or equal to 90. The "low" group consisted of those who rated "importance of communication skill" less than the median of 90. Using

"communication skill" as an additional independent variable with two levels, a four-factor ANOVA revealed a main effect for level of bragging only ($F = 3898.30$, $df = 2,360$, $p < .001$). There were no significant interaction effects. Thus, respondents' perception of the significance of communication skill in an employment interview did not influence evaluations of communication competence. In fact, only level of bragging resulted in significant differences. Table 22 details the results of the analysis of variance.

Summary of Results

Hypotheses one through three which predicted that evaluations of communication competence, communication effectiveness, and communication appropriateness would differ for male and female applicants were not supported.

The 2 x 2 x 3 ANOVAs for research questions one through three identified a main effect for level of bragging. Follow-up tests revealed a trend suggesting that higher levels of bragging result in lower evaluations of Conversational Effectiveness and Conversational Ineffectiveness. Likewise, follow-up tests indicated that higher levels of bragging result in lower evaluations of Conversational Appropriateness and Relational Appropriateness for all three levels of bragging.

Hypothesis four predicted that evaluations of overall communication competence would differ by level of bragging.

Table 21

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations for Characteristics of the Successful Job Applicant, Communication Competence, Communication Effectiveness, and Communication Appropriateness

	ComCmp	CA	RA	CE	CI
Extra Act.	.08 (p=.14)	.03 (p=.61)	-.01 (p=.90)	.12 (p=.01)	.07 (p=.18)
Appearance	.04 (p=.43)	.03 (p=.55)	.05 (p=.35)	-.02 (p=.65)	.02 (p=.66)
Work Exper.	.05 (p=.29)	-.02 (p=.68)	.03 (p=.57)	.06 (p=.18)	.04 (p=.42)
GPA	.09 (p=.06)	.03 (p=.50)	.01 (p=.78)	.06 (p=.17)	.11 (p=.02)
Comm. Skills	-.08 (p=.14)	-.13 (p=.01)	.00 (p=.98)	-.07 (p=.17)	-.04 (p=.39)
Self Conf.	-.03 (p=.55)	-.10 (p=.06)	.00 (p=1.0)	-.05 (p=.25)	-.01 (p=.89)
Honors	.15 (p=.003)	.10 (p=.06)	.06 (p=.24)	.14 (p=.004)	.16 (p=.001)
Location	.05 (p=.35)	.00 (p=.97)	.04 (p=.43)	.02 (p=.64)	.03 (p=.62)
Modesty	.01 (p=.92)	-.03 (p=.59)	-.03 (p=.60)	.04 (p=.39)	.05 (p=.35)
Assertive	-.01 (p=.93)	.09 (p=.08)	.08 (p=.12)	.02 (p=.59)	-.04 (p=.38)

Note: Range for n is 384 - 397.

Table 22

Post Hoc Analysis of Variance for Communication Competence

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Sex of Applicant (SA)	65.52	1	65.52	1.14
Level of Bragging (B)	3898.30	2	1949.15	33.99*
Sex of Respondent (SR)	36.40	1	36.40	.64
Comm. Skill (CS)	134.40	1	134.40	2.34
SA x B	53.14	2	26.57	.46
SA x SR	1.76	1	1.76	.03
B x SR	13.25	2	6.63	.12
CS x SA	6.71	1	6.17	.12
CS x SR	.02	1	.02	.01
CS x B	188.70	2	94.35	1.65
SA x B x SR	256.71	2	128.35	2.24
SA x B x CS	141.25	2	70.62	1.23
B x SR x CS	40.03	2	20.01	.35
SA x SR x CS	68.89	1	68.89	1.20
SA x B x SR x CS	3.93	2	1.97	.03
Error	20642.48	360	57.34	

*$p < .001$

This hypothesis was supported for all three levels of bragging.

The 2 x 2 x 3 ANOVA for research question four revealed a main effect for level of bragging and sex of respondent. Follow-up tests revealed a trend indicating that higher levels of bragging result in lower probability of a recommendation that the applicant be hired. In addition, follow-up tests indicated that male respondents were more likely to recommend hiring, regardless of level of bragging, than were female respondents.

Research question five related to correlations between recommendation for hiring, communication competence,

communication effectiveness, and communication appropriateness. The results indicated statistically significant, positive correlations among all variables.

Research question six related to correlations between communication competence, communication effectiveness, communication appropriateness, and 10 characteristics of the successful job applicant. Only four of the "characteristics" indicated a statistically significant correlation with the dependent variables. All of the significant correlations were in a positive direction.

Chapter 5 presents a complete discussion of these results.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Men and women performing the same or similar behavior often are evaluated differently by both men and women. At issue in the present study, was whether men and women who demonstrate the same communication behavior in an initial task-related context are evaluated similarly in terms of communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness. Specifically, this research sought to investigate the influence of gender and bragging on evaluations of communication competence, communication effectiveness, communication appropriateness, and the probability of recommending that a job applicant be hired. This chapter provides an overview of the problem, methods and results, and a discussion of insights gleaned from those results. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Overview of the Problem

Using gender-role theory as a basis for generating hypotheses and research questions, the present study analyzed evaluations by men and women of the communication competence of other men and women engaging in the same communicative behavior--bragging--in an initial task-related

interaction, the employment interview. Gender-role theory suggests that, based solely on gender, different normative behaviors are expected of men and women in a number of areas, including communication behaviors. Bragging appears to be one communication behavior where differential evaluations occur. Previous research (e.g., Miller et al., 1992) indicates that when men and women brag equally, women are evaluated less favorably than men who demonstrate the same behavior. Thus, bragging provided a framework from which the influence of gender on evaluations of communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness could be assessed.

Gender Differences

Because extant literature suggests that women who brag are evaluated less favorably than men who brag, this study predicted that men and women who demonstrate the same bragging behavior in an initial employment interview would receive differential evaluations of communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness. Furthermore, previous research suggests that in the context of an initial interaction, where information about social roles is limited, more global stereotypes (e.g., gender stereotypes) may affect interactions and judgments of those interactions (Spence et al., 1985). Thus, it was predicted that subjects would evaluate applicants on the basis of the stereotype that bragging is more appropriate for men than

women. Because both men and women share the same expectations regarding normative behaviors for men and women, it was predicted that sex of respondent would not influence evaluations of communication competence, effectiveness, or appropriateness.

Communication Competence

Communication competence is defined as an individual's "ability to interact flexibly with others in a dyadic setting so that the communication is seen as appropriate and effective for the context" (Rubin et al., 1993, p. 210). Many scholars contend that "effectiveness" and "appropriateness" are fundamental aspects of communication competence and an individual must be both in an interaction in order to be communicatively competence. "Effectiveness" refers to the degree to which a communicator achieves his or her personal goals in an interaction. "Appropriateness" refers to the degree to which goals within an interaction are achieved in a socially acceptable manner (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). Communication competence has been related to a host of social phenomena (e.g., academic success/failure, loneliness, self-esteem). Of significance for this study, is that communication competence also has been implicated in occupational success or failure (Spitzberg & Brunner, 1989).

In most studies of gender and communication competence, gender is not the focus of the research, but rather only one of several variables being considered. In fact, gender

differences in evaluations of communication competence are ignored in most studies. When gender is considered in investigations of communication competence, differences often are found. Despite the increased visibility of the importance of "gender differences" in evaluations of communication behavior (Spitzack & Carter, 1987), many contexts in which communication may be influenced by expectations of gender-specific communication behaviors have yet to be adequately examined. In particular, there is a dearth of research on evaluations of communication competence in task-related interactions such as employment interviews.

Employment Interviews

Employment interviews are an important context for evaluations of communication competence because of the potential impact a positive or negative evaluation can have on one's occupational success (Spitzberg & Brunner, 1989). In employment interviews, male applicants generally tend to be evaluated more favorably than equally qualified female applicants (Arvey, 1979; Arvey & Campion, 1982).

As is typical in initial interactions, interviewers often have little information about an applicant prior to the interview itself (Hunt & Eadie, 1987). Consequently, interviewers often rely on general impressions and behaviors exhibited during the interview and stereotypes (e.g., gender stereotypes) as a basis for employment decisions. Gender

stereotypes often place women at a disadvantage in hiring decisions because of perceived incongruity between feminine skills and masculine job requirements (Cohen & Buner, 1975). Thus, the gender of an applicant may affect "expectations, stereotypes, and behaviors of an interviewer which in turn may affect the interview outcome" (Arvey & Campion, 1982, p. 282).

The content of an applicant's communication during an employment interview involves information relating to technical expertise (Shaw, 1983), but also must include positive self-statements (Clowers & Fraser, 1977; Gilmore & Ferris, 1989). Bragging is one means by which a job applicant can reveal his or her expertise and make self enhancing statements. Although bragging does not enjoy widespread social acceptance, it does appear to have some benefits.

Bragging

Bragging has been shown to enhances one's rating of competence or ability when the audience has little or no other information to go on (e.g., when someone makes claims about either a past or future performance on a task) (Miller et al., 1992; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Consequently, bragging is one communication strategy that interviewees may use in an employment interview to demonstrate expertise. However, women tend to be evaluated less favorably when they brag than do men (Miller et al., 1992).

Based on their gender role, men are encouraged and expected to be competitive. Therefore, being braggadocios may be perceived as acceptable behavior for the competitive man. Furthermore, the extra information provided by bragging may ensure a competitive edge over other applicants. In contrast, women are encouraged to be "other" focused. Thus, the female applicant who is "other" focused may be ineffective because she does not reveal enough information about her achievements and qualifications. On the other hand, if the female applicant brags about her accomplishments, she may still be evaluated negatively because her communication is incongruent with her gender role. However, little is known about the influence of bragging behavior on evaluations of communication competence in the context of an initial employment interview. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the influence of bragging behaviors on evaluations of communication competence in a task-related context and, in particular, how those evaluations differ for men and women.

Methods and Results

This investigation examined the influence of gender and bragging on evaluations of communication competence, communication effectiveness, communication appropriateness, and probability of recommending that an applicant be hired. Three employment interview scenarios, with verbatim transcripts, representing "High" (HLB), "Moderate" (MLB) or

"Low" (LLB) levels of bragging, and each attributed to either a male or female job applicant, were used as the treatment stimuli. Each subject, assuming the role of interviewer, read one scenario. Subjects then evaluated the job applicant by responding to a communication competence scale adapted for this study. Subjects also indicated the probability that they would recommend hiring the applicant.

A manipulation check revealed that the three levels of bragging as manipulated in the study actually were perceived differently and in the direction presumed by the manipulation of the treatments. Specifically, the mean for perceived level of bragging at LLB was lower than the mean at MLB and HLB. In addition, the mean for level of bragging at MLB was lower than that at HLB.

A principal components factor analysis with Kaiser varimax rotation revealed four independent factors in the adapted communication competence scale. They were labeled Conversational Appropriateness (CA), Relational Appropriateness (RA), Conversational Effectiveness (CE), and Conversational Ineffectiveness (CI). Cronbach's coefficient alphas for the factors were .91 for CA, .86 for CE, .77 for RA, and .73 for CI. Coefficient alpha was .91 for the complete communication competence scale.

Total variance accounted for by the four factors was 58.4%, with factors related to communication appropriateness explaining far more of the variance (CA 39.3% and RA 4.4%)

than factors related to communication effectiveness (CE 9.7% and CI 5.0%). In addition, correlations among overall communication competence and all four factors were positive and statistically significant.

Evaluations of male and female job applicants' overall communication competence, CA, RA, CE, and CI, did not differ by sex of applicant or sex of respondent. However, evaluations did differ by level of bragging, as predicted. HLB consistently resulted in statistically significant lower evaluations of communication competence, CA, RA, CE, and CI than did LLB or MLB for both male and female job applicants. The differences between means for evaluations of overall communication competence, CA, and RA at all three levels of bragging were statistically significant. The differences between means for evaluations of CE and CI were statistically significant for MLB and HLB only. HLB also resulted in a statistically significant lower probability of recommending that the applicant be hired than did LLB or MLB. In addition, males were more likely to recommend hiring, regardless of level of bragging, than were female respondents.

Results of this study suggest that evaluations of communication competence in one task-related context (an initial employment interview) are more strongly influenced by the propriety of a specific communication behavior than by gender stereotype. The hierarchial nature of the context

used in this study (an initial employment interview) possibly triggers expectations of rather specific standards of conduct on the part of the applicant, thereby making global stereotypes less salient. That is, there may be relatively more specific "rules" of conduct anticipated in an initial employment interview, given the hierarchial nature of the situation. The higher status interviewer may expect the lower status job applicant to be particularly conservative in behavior, including communication behavior (e.g., no profanity or shouting). These findings provide insights into conceptualizing communication competence, the relationship between gender and task-related contexts, bragging as a communication behavior, and the relationship between gender and probability of recommending that a job applicant be hired.

Conceptualizing Communication Competence

"Communication competence" is comprised of "effectiveness" and "appropriateness." Communication competence generally is defined as an individual's ability to interact with others so that personal goals in the interaction are achieved (i.e., effectiveness) in a manner that does not violate the normative expectations of the relationship or context (i.e., appropriateness).

A scale was developed to measure communication competence in this study based on work by Spitzberg and Canary (1985) and Canary and Spitzberg (1987). Factor

analysis of a similar scale by Canary and Spitzberg (1987) revealed three factors which they labeled effectiveness, general appropriateness, and specific appropriateness. However, in the present study, four factors emerged. Two factors were comprised primarily of items initially intended to measure communication effectiveness. These two factors were labeled conversational effectiveness and conversational ineffectiveness. The remaining two factors were comprised of items initially intended to measure communication appropriateness and were labeled conversational appropriateness and relational appropriateness. Together, the emergence of these four factors suggests implications for the conceptualization of communication competence. For example, in an initial task-related context, effectiveness appears to be multidimensional rather than unidimensional as reported by Canary and Spitzberg (1987).

Effectiveness

Communication "effectiveness" is defined as the degree to which a communicator accomplishes his or her personal goals within an interaction (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). Extant communication competence literature tends to conceptualize "effectiveness" as unidimensional (e.g., Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Wiemann, 1977) and focuses primarily on successful goal achievement or task accomplishment within an interaction.

In the present study, Conversational Effectiveness (CE) included seven items that evaluate whether or not the speaker accomplished his or her goal in the interaction (e.g., "It was a rewarding conversation for Steve/Susan"). This factor is compatible with existing conceptualizations of communication effectiveness. That is, the focus of the factor is on the individual's accomplishment of his or her personal goals within the conversation.

Conversational Ineffectiveness (CI) was comprised of three items that evaluated the level of ineffectiveness of the conversation for the speaker (e.g., "The conversation was unprofitable for Steve/Susan"). All three items in CI focused on negative behavior. CI is less consistent with existing conceptualizations of communication effectiveness than is CE. Although the items focus on the outcome of the conversation in terms of reaching goals, the measure is not of "achievement" of those goals, but, rather, lack of achievement. Extant communication competence literature typically does not address the issue of failure to achieve goals, i.e., incompetence, except in general terms of "not being communicatively competent." CI suggests that lack of goal achievement, as well as actual achievement, may influence evaluations of communication competence in an initial task-related context.

At first glance, CE and CI appear to measure the same phenomenon and are simply worded positively versus

negatively. However, these two factors are not isomorphic. The correlation between the two factors was .54, suggesting that the two are relatively independent. Thus, CE and CI should not be viewed as opposite ends of a continuum. That is, CE does not imply the absence of CI and vice versa. Results of the factor analysis reveal that, empirically, Conversational Effectiveness is a condition independent of Conversational Ineffectiveness. Thus, one can be evaluated independently on the basis of both CE and CI when engaged in an interaction. For example, within the context of an employment interview, an applicant's personal goals within the interview might motivate him or her to communicate in a manner which would be deemed "very suitable" but at the same time the conversation would be judged "unprofitable."

In summary, consistent with extant literature related to communication effectiveness, items on the two factors CE and CI relate to goal achievement or conversational outcome. Previous investigations of communication effectiveness suggest that "effectiveness" is unidimensional (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987). However, in a task-related context such as the one used in this study, effectiveness appears to be evaluated on two dimensions rather than one. The distinction between CE and CI, however, is heuristic and not bipolar. That is, CE and CI are independent, rather than isomorphic, factors and as such measure distinctly different aspects of communication effectiveness.

Appropriateness

Communication "appropriateness" is defined as communication that avoids violation of social (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Larson et al., 1978) and relational norms or expectations (Canary & Cupach, 1988). Although extant conceptualizations of communication appropriateness refer to both social and relational expectations, appropriateness typically is measured as a unidimensional construct. In fact, with the exception of Canary and Spitzberg (1987), extant communication competence literature tends to conceptualize "appropriateness" as unidimensional (e.g., Wiemann, 1977).

In the present study, the factor Conversational Appropriateness (CA) was comprised of eight items that assess the suitability of the speaker's remarks to a particular conversational situation (e.g., "Some of his/her remarks were simply improper"). CA clearly refers to individual behavior in an interaction and is consistent with the contention that communication competence is inherently an evaluation of an individual's behavior rather than a skill or trait possessed by an individual (Roloff & Kellermann, 1984). The CA factor in the present study taps evaluations of individual behavior and is similar in scope to what Canary and Spitzberg (1987) refer to as "specific appropriateness." Both the CA and "specific appropriateness" factors are concerned with individual

communication behaviors appropriate within the context of a specific conversation.

In the present study, the factor Relational Appropriateness (RA) was comprised of four items that relate to feelings aroused in the "receiver" by the speaker's remarks (e.g., "I was embarrassed at times by his/her remarks."). Thus, RA moves beyond evaluation of the individual communication behaviors of the speaker to address how those behaviors influence the "relationship" between speaker and receiver. RA is compatible with conceptualizations of "communication competence" as including "interpersonal" or "relational" competence (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). That is, communication is judged competent only within the context of a relational or social system (Canary & Cupach, 1988; Wiemann & Kelly, 1981). Behaviors appropriate in one "relationship" are not necessarily appropriate in another "relationship." For example, bragging may be highly tolerated among close friends, but evaluated less favorably when displayed within an initial interaction such as an employment interview. Thus, RA suggests that evaluation of another's communication appropriateness is influenced not only by that individual's particular communication behavior, as in CA, but also by the effect that behavior has on the relationship as well. RA indicates that in a task-related context, such as an employment interview, the receiver monitors his or her

personal reaction to the communication behavior of the speaker as well as the individual's performance.

According to Cann et al. (1981), interviewers are highly influenced by initial impressions and tend to make quick decisions based on those impressions. The existence of an RA factor of communication competence suggests that these first impressions and quick decisions may be based partly on how the speaker's remarks make the interviewer feel (e.g., embarrassed, uncomfortable). Prior conceptualizations of communication competence appear to focus on either individual behavior or relational appropriateness, but not both. The findings presented here suggest that future theory and research must consider both individual and relational appropriateness in defining and measuring communication competence. The correlation between the two factors was .58, suggesting that the two are relatively independent. Thus, based on the results of the present factor analysis, both kinds of appropriateness independently influence evaluations of communication competence in a task-related initial interaction.

In summary, CA and RA clearly suggest evaluations based on implied normative standards of individual and relational behavior. That is, the factors relate to appropriateness on both an individual and a relational level. Thus, in a task-related context such as the one used in this study, appropriateness appears to be evaluated on two dimensions

that differ from those suggested by Canary and Spitzberg (1987).

Task-Related and Social Contexts

Communication Competence most often is conceptualized as a concern in social and interpersonal communication (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). Further, communication competence most often is investigated within the context of socially based relationships and interactions rather than task-related interactions. Even when task-related contexts form the context for investigations of communication competence, attention rests primarily on the evaluations of socially appropriate and effective individual communication competence. Little, if any, serious attention has been given to the possibility that the context itself, as much as the individual or relational communication behaviors displayed, contributes to evaluations of communication competence. Extant literature implies that "communication competence is communication competence" regardless of where it is evaluated. In order to address the issue of context, the results of two separate factor analyses of similar communication competence scales, but completed in either a task-related or socially relational context, will be compared.

Based on the results of factor analysis of a scale similar to the one used in the present study, Canary and Spitzberg (1987) identified three independent factors in

communication competence. Specifically, Canary and Spitzberg reported a single factor for effectiveness and two factors for appropriateness. The factors identified by Canary and Spitzberg differ in both scope and number from those revealed in the present study. Specifically, the present investigation revealed two factors for effectiveness and two factors for appropriateness. Not only did the number of factors found in the two studies differ, but the nature of the particular items that met the criteria for factor selection differed as well. Some of the differences between these two sets of findings may be explained by examining the items that did not meet the criteria for factor selection in the present study.

In the present investigation, ten items on the initial communication competence scale did not load on a factor. An examination of these items reveals patterns of (a) social expectations and (b) general effectiveness.

First, one set of items seems to be related to social expectations (e.g., "He/she did not violate any of my expectations in the conversation"). As Spitzberg and Cupach (1989) suggest, social skills such as communication that is in "good taste" or is "very proper," are important in initiating and maintaining a person's social or interpersonal network. Given that the context used in the present study was task-related, rather than social, items

relating to social expectations may not be especially relevant.

A second set of items appears to be quite general in terms of evaluations of effectiveness (e.g., "Steve/Susan was an ineffective conversationalist"). General effectiveness, however, may be necessary for the negotiation of ordinary everyday interactions and phatic communication (i.e., contexts in which specific goals or expectations are unclear). Therefore, "general" effectiveness may not be particularly germane to a task-related context (such as the employment interview), in which roles and expectations within those roles are relatively clear (Ragan, 1983; Shaw, 1983).

The context examined by Canary and Spitzberg (1987) was an interpersonal conflict with either a roommate or boyfriend/girlfriend, as opposed to the task-related context in the present study. The findings reported here, when compared to those of Canary and Spitzberg, suggest that evaluations of effective and appropriate communication in an initial task-related context may differ empirically from those in a socially based relationship. Consequently, not only must context be considered in evaluations of communication competence, but apparently context is intrinsic to conceptualizing communication competence as well.

Clearly defining communication competence is important for future research. The findings of this investigation suggest that context is the key to an accurate and complete conceptualization of the construct. That is, evaluations of communication competence appear to differ for communication behavior in a task-related versus a socially-based relational context. For example, communication effectiveness, which traditionally has been conceptualized as unidimensional in social interactions, appears to have two dimensions in an initial task-related context. These two dimensions allow measurement of both conversational effectiveness (i.e., achievement of personal, idiosyncratic goals) and conversational ineffectiveness (i.e., achievement of more global goals).

Although communication appropriateness has been conceptualized as consisting of two dimensions in socially based interactions, the two dimensions found in the present study differ from those found previously. Prior investigations of socially-based interactions determined that communication appropriateness could be conceptualized as "specific" and "general." In contrast, the present study suggests that in a task-related context, appropriateness consists of "individual" and "relational" appropriateness. Extant literature contends that it is axiomatic that communication competence is "context specific." However, communication competence is not being explicitly defined,

nor seriously taught, in accordance with that axiom. Instead, of paying lip service to the importance of context, future research efforts should be devoted to an understanding of the influence of context as well as communication behavior on evaluations of communication competence.

Gender and Task-Related Contexts

The failure to find statistically significant differences in the evaluations of communication competence, effectiveness, or appropriateness for men and women job applicants, suggests that men and women are not evaluated differently when they brag in a task-related interaction. Such a finding is contrary to extant literature in gender and bragging. Gender-role theory suggests that men and women performing the same or similar behavior, including communication behaviors, often are evaluated differently by both men and women (Eagly, 1987). Bragging is one such communication behavior (Miller et al., 1992). Because bragging is consistent with competitive, masculine behavior, it is reasonable to assume that women who brag will be evaluated less favorably than men who perform similar bragging behavior. Such differences in evaluations are the result of behavioral expectations based on men's and women's disparate status in society.

The findings of the present study, however, are not necessarily contradictory to gender-role theory. As Eagly explains,

> The absence of counterstereotypic expectations based on other social roles is also very important for obtaining stereotypic sex differences, because in natural settings, other social roles are often far more salient and provide more explicit guides to behavior than expectations based on gender. For example, in employment settings, the role expectations associated with one's job are very important determinants of one's behavior. (p. 27)

Based on this caveat to gender-role theory, extant literature on interviewing and status provides a clue as to why men and women job applicants were evaluated similarly in the present study.

The context used in the present investigation created a second hierarchy that competed with gender as a hierarchy. According to status characteristics theory, gender has two states, male and female, that are evaluated differentially in society (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977). Specifically, "males are valued more highly than females" (Johnson, 1993, p. 195). Thus, gender constitutes a hierarchy within society. Within the employment interview, a competing hierarchy consists of interviewer and applicant, with the interviewer most often maintaining a higher status in the interaction than the applicant (Ragan, 1983; Shaw, 1983). In an interview, the higher status of the interviewer is linked directly to the task at hand and has been legitimated by others (Johnson, 1993). Thus, in the present study, both male and female job applicants were in a low status position within the interview context. Gender-role theory predicts that when men and women occupy <u>equal</u>

positions within a hierarchy, evaluations of behavior should be relatively similar. And, that is what occurred in this study. Men and women, in equal positions of job applicant (i.e., relatively low status), and who demonstrated similar bragging behavior, received relatively similar evaluations of communication competence. Although evaluations of communication competence were not influenced by gender in the present study, bragging did have an influence on those evaluations.

Bragging and Task-Related Contexts

Bragging is not looked upon favorably by society in general (Miller et al., 1992). Nevertheless, bragging has been shown to enhance one's rating of general competence (Miller et al., 1992; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). However, little is known empirically about how bragging affects communication interactions (Miller et al., 1992).

In the present study, bragging was consistently and strongly more influential in evaluations of communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness than any other variable. This suggests that evaluations of communication competence in a task-related context where a socially undesirable communication behavior such as bragging is displayed, are influenced more by norms of individual and relational appropriateness than norms of gender appropriate behavior.

In an initial task-related interaction such as the one used in this study, bragging on either a low, moderate, or high level may be viewed as differentially appropriate. As noted earlier, initial impressions influence employment interview decisions and, apparently, evaluations of communication competence as well. In this study, respondents had no information about the "applicant" (e.g., resume, letter of recommendation), other than initial impressions, that might serve to ameliorate an initial negative response to the bragging behavior. Given that impressions are formed early in any initial interaction (Zunin & Zunin, 1972), being communicatively appropriate (e.g., adhering to conventional social and relational rules of decorum) may be more important in initial task-related encounters than being communicatively effective (i.e., being persuasive, appearing "successful"). Being communicatively effective in initial task-related interactions is important, but the results of the present study suggests that unless a job applicant is individually and relationally appropriate as well, he or she may never get the chance to "get the job." That is, level of bragging also appears to influence the probability of recommending that an applicant be hired.

Probability of Recommending Applicant Be Hired

The relationships between probability of recommending than a job applicant be hired and judgments of communication competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness were all

positive and statistically significant. This finding is consistent with prior research which contends that communication is an important aspect of the successful employment interview. Important in this study is that a particular theoretical perspective (communication competence), rather than a particular communication "skill" (e.g., listening, eye contact) was correlated with probability of a recommendation to hire. The findings of this study indicate that evaluations of communication effectiveness and appropriateness in task-related contexts differ from those involving a social relationship. An important task, then, for the potential job applicant, is to familiarize him- or herself with the situational standards unique to an initial employment interview.

An unexpected main effect for sex of respondent was found for probability of a recommendation to hire. Male respondents overall were more likely to recommend hiring than were female respondents, regardless of level of bragging. Work by McLaughlin et al. (1985) suggest that when "planning" a boast, men are more likely to boast in response to questions, thereby demonstrating the agentic behavior associated with men's gender role. In contrast, women attempt to manage conversation in a way that leaves an opening for the boast. The bragging episodes in this study were boasts offered in response to a question--a communication behavior apparently more familiar to men than

to women. Given that bragging appears to be more socially acceptable for men than women, bragging also may be more accepted by men in general than women, and particularly when it is in response to a question.

Despite the numerous implications of the present study, the investigation also has some limitations. The next section will discuss the major limitations to these findings.

Limitations of the Present Investigation

Several factors contributed to the limitations of this investigation. For example, the use of written scenarios rather than face-to-face stimuli may have influenced the results, particularly in terms of making gender of applicant salient. Face-to-face simulated employment interviews with same-sex and mixed-sex dyads would make gender visible. An additional benefit derived from face-to-face interactions is that respondents could evaluate their own level of effectiveness, rather than the unknown goal achievement of another speaker.

A second limitation of this study involves the way "effectiveness" was measured. Respondents' were asked to evaluate the goal achievement of another individual. Because respondents did not necessarily know what the applicant's goal was, evaluations of "effectiveness" may have been difficult. As Spitzberg (1993) states, in

general, effectiveness is "idiosyncratic to one's private objectives" (p. 3).

Future Research in Communication Competence

The failure of the present study to report statistically significant differences in evaluations of men and women does not imply that gender research in communication competence should be abandoned. Because bragging is, in general, a socially undesirable behavior, the gender of the person who brags may be less important than the bragging behavior itself. For example, in this study, the influence of bragging on evaluations of communication competence was far greater any other variable. Differences in the means for evaluations of overall communication competence, Conversational Appropriateness, and Relational Appropriateness were statistically significant at all three levels of bragging. Differences in the means for evaluations of Conversational Effectiveness (CE) and Conversational Ineffectiveness (CI) were statistically significant for moderate and high level bragging. The only comparisons which were not statistically significant were the differences in means for evaluations of CE and CI at low and moderate levels of bragging. These findings suggest that the particular communication behavior selected for this study (bragging) may have contributed to the failure to find gender differences. That is, bragging possibly represents one violation of the relatively

conservative conduct that a higher status interviewer may expect from a lower status job applicant, regardless of the applicant's gender. Therefore, future research should consider the use of communication behaviors less socially offensive than bragging, yet tend to result in differential evaluations of men and women (e.g., direct and indirect communication styles).

In other investigations of gender and communication competence, some researchers have found gender differences in task-related contexts (e.g., Reiser & Troost, 1986; Smith & DeWine, 1991). Other researchers investigating interpersonal contexts have not found gender differences (e.g., Spitzberg & Hunt, 1987). Neither Reiser and Troost (1986), Smith and DeWine (1991), nor Spitzberg and Hunt (1987) used the same communication competence scale in their studies. Yet another scale was used in this investigation. Thus, different communication competence scales appear to produce different results when examining gender differences. Given the vast array of published scales purported to measure communication competence (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989), the particular instrument selected may influence findings of gender difference. Therefore, two or more different communication competence scales should be used in a single investigation of communication competence. If two or more independent instruments produce similar results regarding gender differences, then the researcher can be more

confident in estimating the influence of gender on evaluations of communication competence.

Whether future research confirms the results of this study, in which no statistical differences in evaluations of men and women were found, or prior research in which statistical differences were found, all will serve to make explicit a previously little noted condition: the influence of gender in evaluations of communication competence. If communication competence continues to be touted as a valid assessment of communication literacy (Larson et al., 1978) the influence of variables (e.g., gender) other than "communication skills" (e.g., listening) on evaluations of communication competence must be understood.

APPENDIX A
HIGH BRAGGING SCENARIO

Please be assured that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and your responses are confidential. At no time is your name associated with the questionnaire and we will perform statistical analyses only on the basis of the combined responses of all study participants. Also be assured that participation does not influence your grade in this class in any way.

The focus of this study is employment interviews. The study asks you to pretend that you are the interviewer in the situation we describe. It is EXTREMELY important that you take the role you are assigned seriously. Use your powers of imagination to portray the role of interviewer.

Situation

As a student at the University of Florida, you are currently involved in a summer internship for college credit at a local company. It is the position of management at this company, that interns should experience all aspects of work that an employee might expect. Consequently, you have been asked to interview several applicants for a position with the company.

The applicant, Susan (Steve) Carson, is in your office. This is the first time you have met Susan (Steve). You have been chatting with Susan (Steve) for a few minutes and have now asked her (him) to tell you what she (he) considers her (his) most important achievement while in college. Susan (Steve) responds as follows:

Susan (Steve) pauses briefly and says, "My department had its annual awards dinner last week. I had my best year ever, so I was in a great mood. The department gave me the Most Outstanding Graduating Senior award. But that was no surprise since I have maintained the highest GPA among seniors all year. Actually, I'm the best all-round student the department has had in a long time."

Susan (Steve) hesitates a moment and then continues, "I could have my choice of graduate schools, but I prefer to gain some practical experience before earning a graduate degree."

APPENDIX B
MODERATE BRAGGING SCENARIO

Please be assured that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and your responses are confidential. At no time is your name associated with the questionnaire and we will perform statistical analyses only on the basis of the combined responses of all study participants. Also be assured that participation does not influence your grade in this class in any way.

The focus of this study is employment interviews. The study asks you to pretend that you are the interviewer in the situation we describe. It is EXTREMELY important that you take the role you are assigned seriously. Use your powers of imagination to portray the role of interviewer.

Situation

As a student at the University of Florida, you are currently involved in a summer internship for college credit at a local company. It is the position of management at this company, that interns should experience all aspects of work that an employee might expect. Consequently, you have been asked to interview several applicants for a position with the company.

The applicant, Susan (Steve) Carson, is in your office. This is the first time you have met Susan (Steve). You have been chatting with Susan (Steve) for a few minutes and have now asked her (him) to tell you what she (he) considers her (his) most important achievement while in college. Susan (Steve) responds as follows:

Susan (Steve) pauses briefly and says, "My department had its annual awards dinner last week. Everyone in my department had a good year, so everyone was in a great mood. The department gave me the Most Outstanding Graduating Senior award. Was I surprised!"

Susan (Steve) hesitates a moment and continues, "But I have maintained the highest GPA among seniors all year and am the best all-round student the department has had in a long time. I was really pleased to get the award and the recognition."

APPENDIX C
LOW BRAGGING SCENARIO

Please be assured that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and your responses are confidential. At no time is your name associated with the questionnaire and we will perform statistical analyses only on the basis of the combined responses of all study participants. Also be assured that participation does not influence your grade in this class in any way.

The focus of this study is employment interviews. The study asks you to pretend that you are the interviewer in the situation we describe. It is EXTREMELY important that you take the role you are assigned seriously. Use your powers of imagination to portray the role of interviewer.

Situation

As a student at the University of Florida, you are currently involved in a summer internship for college credit at a local company. It is the position of management at this company, that interns should experience all aspects of work that an employee might expect. Consequently, you have been asked to interview several applicants for a position with the company.

The applicant, Susan (Steve) Carson, is in your office. This is the first time you have met Susan (Steve). You have been chatting with Susan (Steve) for a few minutes and have now asked her (him) to tell you what she (he) considers her (his) most important achievement while in college. Susan (Steve) responds as follows:

Susan (Steve) pauses briefly and says, "My department had its annual awards dinner last week. Everyone in my department had a good year, so everyone was in a great mood. The department gave me the Most Outstanding Graduating Senior award. Was I surprised!"

Susan (Steve) hesitates a moment and then continues, "I worked really hard this year, but had some fun as well. So I was really pleased to get the award and the recognition. I was glad to contribute to the department."

APPENDIX D

MEASURES OF COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE
AND PROBABILITY OF HIRING

The following are statements about the communication behaviors of Susan (Steve). On a scale from 0 to 100%, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. If you do not agree at all with the statement, then put 0. If the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement falls somewhere between 0 and 100, then use any number that best indicates your level of agreement.

0----------100
Do Not Agree At All. Completely Agree.

1. It was a useless conversation for Susan/Steve. _____%
2. The WAY she/he said some of her/his remarks was unsuitable. _____%
3. Everything she/he said was appropriate. _____%
4. She/he was a smooth conversationalist. _____%
5. The conversation was unprofitable for Susan/Steve. _____%
6. Susan/Steve was effective in the conversation. _____%
7. The conversation was very unrewarding for Susan/Steve. _____%
8. She/he did not violate any of my expectations in the conversation. _____%
9. Susan/Steve achieved everything she/he hoped to achieve in the conversation. _____%
10. Occasionally, her/his statements made me feel uncomfortable. _____%

11. Susan/Steve was an ineffective conversationalist. _____%

12. The conversation was very beneficial for Susan/Steve. _____%

13. I was comfortable throughout the conversation with her/his remarks. _____%

14. She/he said some things that were simply the incorrect things to say. _____%

15. She/he said some things that should not have been said. _____%

16. The things she/he spoke about were all in good taste as far as I'm concerned. _____%

17. She/he said several things that seemed out of place in the conversation. _____%

18. Some of her/his remarks were simply improper. _____%

19. Her/his conversation was very suitable to the situation. _____%

20. The conversation was unsuccessful for Susan/Steve. _____%

21. I was embarrassed at times by her/his remarks. _____%

22. The conversation went pretty much the way Susan/Steve wanted. _____%

23. None of her/his remarks were embarrassing to me. _____%

24. At least one of her/his remarks was rude. _____%

25. Some of her/his remarks were inappropriate. _____%

26. It was an advantageous conversation for Susan/Steve. _____%

27. It was a rewarding conversation for Susan/Steve. _____%

28. Her/his communication was very proper. _____%

29. Some of the things she/he said were in bad taste. _____%

30. Susan/Steve got what she/he wanted out of the conversation. _____%

31. Some of the things she/he said were awkward. _____%

32. The conversation was very useful and helpful for Susan/Steve. _____%

You must make a recommendation to your supervisor regarding hiring Susan/Steve. Using the same 0-100% scale, what is the probability that you would recommend hiring Steve/Susan? _____%

APPENDIX E

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUCCESSFUL JOB APPLICANT

Below is a list of applicant qualities that interviewers consider in an employment interview. On a scale from 0 to 100%, please indicate how important YOU believe each quality is to a successful employment interview. If you do not think the quality is important at all in a job interview, then put 0. If the importance of the quality falls somewhere between 0 and 100, then use any number that best indicates your opinion.

0----------100
Not Important At All Completely Important

Extracurricular Activities	_____%
Appearance	_____%
Work Experience	_____%
Grade Point Average	_____%
Communication Skills	_____%
Self-Confidence	_____%
Honors Received	_____%
Location Preference	_____%
Modesty	_____%
Assertiveness	_____%

APPENDIX F

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS AND MANIPULATION CHECK

Please provide the following information about yourself:

1. Sex: (1) _____ Male (2) _____ Female

2. Age: _____ Years

3. Year in School: (1) _____ Freshman (2) _____ Sophomore
   (3) _____ Junior (4) _____ Senior

4. How much did Steve/Susan, the interviewee in the scenario, brag?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Low									High

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nelya Jane McKenzie, daughter of Francis Farish and Irma Elizabeth (Gunn) McKenzie, was born July 28, 1948 in Montgomery, Alabama. She attended public schools in Alabama and received the degree Bachelor of Science (secondary education) from Auburn University June 1970. After graduation, she served as a caseworker and court service worker for the State of Georgia from 1971 to 1976. She entered the Graduate School, Auburn University, in 1976 and received the degree Master of Arts in speech communication August 1978. After receiving her MA degree, she worked in business in various capacities until 1990 when she became an instructor at Auburn University at Montgomery. In 1991 she entered the Graduate School, University of Florida, and received the degree Doctor of Philosophy August 1994.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Rebecca J. Cline, Chair
Associate Professor of Communication Processes and Disorders

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Anthony J. Clark
Associate Professor of Communication Processes and Disorders

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Rebecca S. Ford
Assistant Professor of Sociology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Leonard P. Tipton
Professor of Journalism and Communications

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Donald E. Williams

Donald E. Williams
Professor of Communication
Processes and Disorders

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Communication Processes and Disorders in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August 1994

Dean, Graduate School

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